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THE BOOK REVIEW

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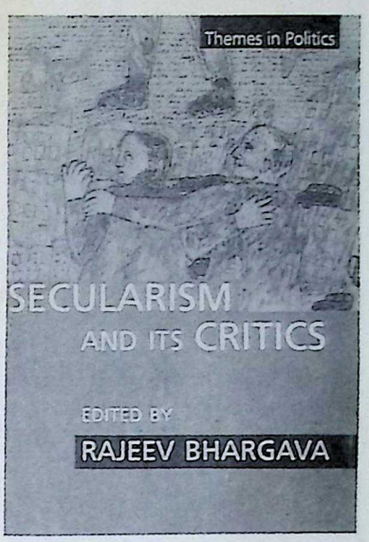
Secularism in India: Ideal or Illusion?

Brian Barry

SECULARISM AND ITS CRITICS

Edited by Rajeev Bhargava

Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1998, pp. 550, Rs. 695.00



In *Through the Looking Glass*, Humpty Dumpty told Alice that when he made a word do a lot of work he always paid it extra. On that basis, the word 'secularism' would be able to present a very large bill to the publishers of this book. One might not unreasonably pick up a book entitled *Secularism and Its Critics* in the expectation that there was something called 'secularism' which was going to be defended by some people and attacked by others. Such a belief would make it impossible to make sense of what is going on in the book. In fact, the 'secularism' attacked by some contributors has only a fairly tenuous connection with the 'secularism' defended by others. More surprisingly, perhaps, the precise set of arrangements advocated by one contributor as a departure from secularism would count as secularist on the definition of at least one other.

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In a secular society, arguments for or against public policies will rarely be made on the basis of religious beliefs, simply because such appeals will have little impact. But must a secular state be one in which public policies are not advocated on religious grounds?

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It is important to distinguish between a secular state and a secular society. A secular state is one that is detached from religion. A secular society is one in which religious beliefs are weakly held by most people and play little part in their lives. Some countries whose states come close to the secular model, such as the United States and Turkey, are far from being secular societies. Conversely a relatively secular society does not have a completely secular state: England and Sweden, for example, both have an established church and most western European countries subsidize religious schools. Nehru (quoted on pp. 311–12) drew this distinction in 1961, saying that, although the Indian Constitution made India a secular state, India functioned as a less secular society than England. This could be taken as setting the terms for the debate about alternative futures for India carried out in the book by a number of (resident and non-resident) Indian scholars.

In a secular society, arguments for or against public policies will rarely be made on the basis of religious beliefs, simply because such appeals will have little impact. But must a secular state be one in which public policies are not advocated on religious grounds? This question has arisen in an acute form in the United States, where politicians and other public figures frequently claim religious support for their positions. Some scholars claim that it is a violation of the 'wall of separation' between church and state for this to occur. This would mean that it was illegitimate for Martin Luther King to invoke the Christian gospel in support of the civil rights movement or for the Roman Catholic bishops to plead for more generous welfare provision on the basis of the Church's social doctrines. It is easier to see how a secular state can be maintained in a non-secular society, if we define a secular state in purely institutional terms.

None of the chapters focussed on the Indian situation seems to me to get quite clear the distinction between a secular society and a secular state. Stanley Tambiah offers a valuable analysis of 'secularism', but even he confuses the issue by equating "the establishment of religion" clause in Art. 1 of the U.S. Constitution, which declares that government shall neither prescribe nor proscribe religion with secularism as defined by the *Shorter Oxford Dictionary*: 'the doctrine that morality should be based on regard for the well-being of mankind in the present life, to the exclusion of all considerations drawn from belief in God or in a future state' (p. 420). The definition is clearly of an entire philosophy of life, sometimes called 'secular humanism'. But the separation of church and state is (as the American example demonstrates) entirely compatible with a society in which secular humanists form only a small minority.

Other authors mix things up much more systematically. Thus, T.N. Madan and Ashis Nandy (who are ably criticized by Tambiah, Akeel Bilgrami and Rajeev Bhargava) say that 'secularism' is inappropriate to Indian conditions. But while it is clear that India is not a secular society, this leaves it open whether or not the state should be a secular state. According to Madan, the notion that religion can be 'privatized', as a secular state requires, is one that makes sense only to 'Protestant Christians' and not to 'Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims or Sikhs' (p. 298). This leaves Roman Catholics in limbo (appropriately enough, since only they believe in it), but Madan later endorses the claim that 'secularization is the gift of Christianity to mankind' (p. 307), so perhaps non-Protestant Christians get in too.

There is a certain irony in Madan's eager embrace, on behalf of the East, of an 'orientalist' idea originally developed to show the superiority of the West. In any case, it is plain that non-Christian religions can flourish in (more or less) secular states. Thus, the Sikh, Hindu and Muslim religious communities thrive in Britain. Moreover, societies with an overwhelming preponderance of non-Christian believers can also be secular, as Turkey illustrates most dramatically. (It is interesting in this context that 'Jawaharlal Nehru's first mention of the secular state in writings (1933) was in connection with the Turkish republic' (p. 192). Those who wish to question the political relevance of this example will no doubt point out that secularization in Turkey took place in the aftermath of a revolution and even then has needed the army to underwrite it. But that does impugn its relevance in showing that a secular state in a non-Christian country is not only intelligible but feasible.

Most of the contributors are concerned with the prospects for a secular state in India, taking it as given that India is not and is not likely to be in the foreseeable future a secular society. A number of the authors are in favour of a secular state, but it seems to me that none of them actually wishes to endorse a secular state as I have defined it. Instead, they tend to identify a secular state with the set of institutional arrangements that they wish to advocate. Thus, Bhargava and Bilgrami both argue for some kind of negotiated settlement among religions in which the state plays an active part. This may be a perfectly reasonable proposal in the Indian context, but I question the applicability of the term 'secularism' to it. Bhargava calls it 'contextual secularism', but perhaps it would be more perspicuous to say that it is a proposal designed to be applied in a context in which secularism is not a politically feasible option. Bilgrami rejects the idea of an 'Archimedean' argument for a secular state. (An example of such an argument would be that it is the only way of realizing the values of equal liberty and fair treatment.) Instead, he hopes that it will be possible to persuade each religion's adherents of the virtues of eventual state disengagements by appealing to their own beliefs. But this idea, which parallels the American John Rawls's recent notion of an 'overlapping consensus', runs into the same objection as has been made to that: if there is no independent reason for being in favour of a secular state, what motive is there for trying to persuade religious believers that they are (even if they do not realize it) committed to one?

Moreover, it seems a rather desperate hope that a secular state is bound to be the locus of an 'overlapping consensus'. Partha Chatterjee thinks that there is a far better chance of agreement on an arrangement in which the different religious organizations carve up political authority in such a way that each religious community controls its own members according to its own rules. This would be a modernized version of the *millet* system that proved highly durable within the Ottoman empire. Some western political theo-

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rists call this 'pluralism' and contrast it with 'liberalism'. I believe that they are quite right to draw attention to the incompatibility between the two. By the same token, a pluralistic society of this kind, in which political power is handed over to religious authorities, cannot properly be described as any form of secularism. Rather, it is the institutionalization of religion. Chatterjee makes it clear that he himself sees his proposal as incompatible with secularism, which he defines as the idea 'that the state not involve itself in religious affairs or organizations' (p. 358).

'Toleration', Chatterjee says, 'would require one to accept that there will be political contexts where a group could insist on its right not to give reasons for doing things differently, provided it explains itself in its own chosen forum' (p. 375). His approach 'would start from the historically given reality of separate religion-based personal laws and the intricate involvement of state agencies in the affairs of religious institutions' (p. 375). State involvement will be accepted as fair, he suggests, when it accords with the self-understanding of groups. He shares this premise with Bilgrami but draws sharply different implications from it, and Bilgrami offers a spirited critique of Chatterjee (pp. 402–17).

Undeniably, Chatterjee's proposal for a state presiding over a set of politically organized religious communities would treat all religions symmetrically. This would make it an example of secularism on Amartya Sen's definition (p. 456), according to which symmetry is all that is required: the state can support religion or not, so long as it does on the same terms for all. Bhargava's 'contextualist' secularism seems to me to have some of the same properties.

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What could it mean to claim to be abolishing caste distinctions officially without insisting that all Hindus must be able to worship in any temple? Where some practice is at the core of the discrimination that the state has pledged itself to eliminate, the state must surely step in to ban it. But is this contrary to even the strictest interpretation of secularism as the separation of the state from religion?

This conception of secularism as symmetry is apparently quite deep-rooted. Thus, in a hostile review of D.E. Smith's *India as a Secular State*, Marc Galanter quotes him as complaining of 'the persistent tendency in present-day [i.e. 1963] India to define secularism simply in terms of non-discrimination in the promotion of religion... For most (Indians), the basis of the secular state is not a "wall of separation" between state and religion, but the "no-preference doctrine" which requires only that no special privileges be granted to any one religion' (p. 264 n. 63). Galanter himself says that 'Indian secularism does not conform to either of these patterns' (p. 264), but this way of putting it implicitly accepts that 'secularism' is going to be simply the name attached to whatever 'compromises and accommodations' (p. 264) among religions occur in India.

I have so far focussed on the fourth part of the book: 'Secularism in India: The Recent Debate'. This is also considerably the longest, amounting to seven of the fifteen chapters. The first part consists of a subtle and penetrating essay by T.M. Scanlon on 'Tolerance' which is tangentially related to secularism, and one by Charles Taylor on 'Modes of Secularism' which advocates the 'overlapping consensus' mode that I have already queried. Part two is entitled 'Secularism in the West', but I think its three items would leave any reader who knew nothing else about the subject with a rather odd notion of the ways in which predominantly Christian countries (which is what 'western' means here) have dealt with religion. Thus, the notion of a 'separation of church and state' has been most explicitly stated and worked out in the United States. But instead of an exposition of the Supreme Court's interpretation, we get a tendentious attack on it by Michael Sandel. The piece by Joseph Carens and Melissa Williams is also misleading as a guide to 'western' ideas and practices. Their recommendation that polygamy should be legalized and their claim that French *haute couture* is more limiting to women than the *hijab* (pp. 156 and 161) are best seen as rather desperate attempts to ride the bandwagon of Political Correctness that currently appears to be careering out of control in Canada. There is also a historically rich account by Jean Bauberot of the role played by the notion of laicité in France since the Revolution. While this is a first rate essay, it illustrates how peculiar France is within western Europe in the polarization of lay and religious (i.e. Roman Catholic) forces.

I have already mentioned D.E. Smith, and a substantial extract from his *India as a Secular State* leads off part three, entitled 'Secularism in India: The Early Debate'. The review of that book by Mark Galanter, from which I quoted earlier, follows this. The remaining piece is also by Galanter. Entitled 'Hinduism, Secularism, and the Indian Judiciary', its flavour is adequately captured in his description of 'the legal system' as 'provid[ing] a forum in which the aspirations of India's governing élite confront the ambitions and hopes of the component groups in Indian society' (p. 269). This way of putting the issue makes it impossible to imagine that there might be élites exploiting the ambitions and hopes of component groups as a means to furthering their own political ambitions or that the ideal of a secular state might have some resonance among those oppressed by their own religious community or fearful that the only alternative to a secular state is one riven by religious conflict.

This gets me back to part four, and I have already mentioned all the authors represented there. Rather than say more about them individually, I should like to conclude by pursuing a question that almost all of them bring up in one way or another. This is the question of the way in which the phenomenon of caste impinges on the idea of a secular state in the Indian context. Smith, for whom the United States is the model, not surprisingly finds a 'major problem for the secular state' in 'the extensive state interference in Hindu religious institutions' (p. 226). Among the examples which Smith gives is 'the admission of Harijans into Hindu temples' (p. 213). But could a state whose constitution commits it to the abolition of untouchability do any less?

Let us look at the attempt to eliminate by law another system of inequality ascribed at birth, that of racism in the United States. Obviously, policies adopted by public authorities that discriminated on a basis of race had to be barred. But that still left an equally important form of racism: discrimination by private employers, sellers and renters of property, and so on. The abolition of racism by law would have been a travesty without strong measures to attack such private discrimination.

In America, the 'separation of church and state' has inhibited legal measures that might have interfered with racially exclusive religious congregations. But in the great religious supermarket (as it has been described) of the USA, everybody can find something to suit them. 'Separate but equal' is not the cruel hoax in religion that it undeniably was in education, so racially exclusionary churches are not as obnoxiously discriminatory as might appear. Indeed, compulsory integration might well be resented by many all-black congregations.

Contrast with this the Indian case. What could it mean to claim to be abolishing caste distinctions officially without insisting that all Hindus must be able to worship in any temple? Where some practice is at the core of the discrimination that the state has pledged itself to eliminate, the state must surely step in to ban it. But is this contrary to even the strictest interpretation of secularism as the separation of the state from religion? A number of writers (quoted by Galanter in nn. 6 and 7, p. 271) regard it as axiomatic that it must be. But is this necessarily so?

Smith quotes the Supreme Court as saying in 1954: 'Suppose that one believed that human sacrifices were a necessary part of religious worship, would it be seriously contended that the civil government under which he lived could not interfere to prevent such sacrifice?' (p. 195). This would seem to cover *sati*. But since 1954, the Supreme Court has moved further to a position (to the chagrin of Sandel) such that religion does not count as an excuse for individuals or churches to behave in ways that there are sound public policy for prohibiting. In the context of a religion adhered to by eighty-five per cent of the population, would not the Supreme Court's reasoning lead to the conclusion that the elimination of untouchability is a sufficiently compelling objective of public policy to legitimate prohibiting the exclusion of a Hindu from worship in a temple? The point is that a secular state is not necessarily one that maximizes the freedom of religious organizations.

The issues raised by this book are of great moment: their urgency is if anything even greater than when the chapters were written. As an outsider, I have found this collection enormously enlightening and provocative. I am sure that those who are living nearer to the problems will not find it any less so. I hope, however, that if (as it deserves) the book goes into a second printing the publisher will ensure that the profuse typographical errors are fixed. Most are no more than distracting (though when they get to half a dozen per page that is quite a distraction), but some are more serious: for example Madan wrote that secularism is 'impotent' as a blueprint for India (p. 298) but is quoted later as saying that it is 'important' (p. 438)—rather a different proposition. The book also needs an index.

Brian Barry teaches at the London School of Economics.

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The Fall and Rise of Brahminical Order

Harish Khare

QUEST FOR POWER: OPPOSITIONAL MOVEMENTS AND POST-CONGRESS POLITICS IN UTTAR PRADESH

By Zoya Hasan

Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1998, pp. 280, Rs. 445.00

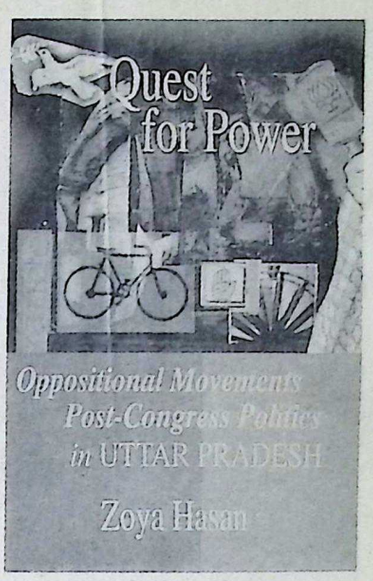
Two initiatives of the Vajpayee government attest to the correctness of the basic contentions in Zoya Hasan's book, a veritable *tour de force* of political change in Uttar Pradesh in the last two decades. First, the Atal Behari Vajpayee government's decision to reward K.C. Pant, everybody's favourite mediocre, with the chairmanship of the Task Force of the proposed National Security Council. The second was the Prime Minister Mr. Vajpayee's entirely unprovoked statement on the eve of Ambedkar Jayanti that his government had no intention of changing the existing reservation regime. If the first development brings home the tenacious ability of UP's upper caste-upper class combine to stay on top of the pile, the second underscores the clout the backward classes have come to wield. The BJP's ability to cater simultaneously to the demands from two contradictory sources is the story of the Sangh Parivar's rise to commanding heights in UP, and Zoya Hasan tells the story incisively.

Like the rest of the country, Uttar Pradesh too has witnessed changes—political, economic and social—which have variously expressed themselves in the idiom of class, caste and community; but, because of a number of characteristics peculiar to the State it is only in Uttar Pradesh that context over policies and power has resulted in so decisive a victory for majoritarian ideas and strategies. And given the very size of Uttar Pradesh and its centrality to national politics, the outcome of the contest has a definite bearing on the all-India equations.

The most fascinating part of the Uttar Pradesh story, as told by Zoya Hasan, is the continuing experimentation in strategic political choices made in order to maintain the upper caste-upper class (UCUC) combine's domination—that too in the face of the relentless logic of participatory democracy. As long as the Congress served the interests of the upper caste-upper class combine, it could not be challenged politically; and, the very dominance of this combine in the Congress leadership structure enfeebled the party in meeting the challenges posed by new forces, unleashed by structural changes (like half-hearted land reforms, zamindari abolition, etc.), by technological changes (green revolution), and by parliamentary democracy (like mobilization of backward castes). And what makes the UP story so fascinating is that the challenge to the UCUC combine invariably degenerated into a struggle over political power rather than any attempt to transform radically the State structure.

In fact, the UCUC combine controlled access to politics and policies, with the result that "zamindari abolition altered agrarian relations only to the extent of shifting the location of rural power from feudal to cultivating landowners." The first serious challenge to the Congress hegemony came from the new landed elite. When the green revolution brought prosperity to the backward caste cultivators, they began aspiring for social equality with the upper caste landlords. But the UCUC combine managed to tame the class potential of the farmers' movement and diverted its energies into a pure contest over political power, demanding a shift in the urban-rural balance in the allocation of resources. "Its ideologies distinguished the farmers' movement from peasant movements in the past on the grounds that earlier movements were class-based and thus divisive, whereas the farmers' movement stressed that the main conflict was between countryside and city."

The story of UP is also the story of the status quoist, reactionary, and Brahminical nature of Congress hegemony, the debilitating effect that hegemony had on the Congress capacity to accommodate new forces and voices as it had done for decades before and after 1947. Four converging features of the breakdown of the Congress control become discernible in Zoya Hasan's account. First, the developmental model had failed by the mid-1960s. The new "opportunity structures" simply could not satisfy new claimants to the piece.



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The UCUC combine could see to it that the land reforms did not take off, opposed rural taxation; and, therefore, when the food shortages, rising prices and increasing income disparities took hold of people's imagination, the Congress found itself limping. The middle class became alienated, and remained alienated. Second, the predominance the Brahmins enjoyed in the Congress prevented the party from acquiring sensitivity to the new aspirations. Zoya Hasan talks of "tremendous resilience and resourcefulness" of the upper caste-class coalition "whereas in Bihar, the intra-elite rivalries between Bhumihar and Rajput led subcoalitions had already become so bitter that by the early 1960s, the Congress Chief Minister was forced to turn to leaders of the upper backward castes, who commanded a substantial following. Rivalries within the ruling coalition in UP did not create similar opportunities for backward castes." Third, the central-oriented party control model, practised assiduously first by Indira Gandhi and later by Rajiv Gandhi, exhausted the Uttar Pradesh Congress leaders politically, psychologically and intellectually. The central leadership made demands of loyalty, obedience and conformity on the state leaders, compelling the UP Congress leaders to be more mindful of the mood in New Delhi rather than of the urges in Behariach or Gorakhpur or Kanpur. The inevitable result was that "state politics was no longer a decisive factor in determining leadership structures, whereas in the past leadership and policies had been the outcome of competition between factions at the state level." And, fourth, the governing model, sought to be put in place in the 1980s by the Congress, was obviously flawed. With all their presumed sagacity and wisdom and innovativeness. Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi simply failed to anticipate, leave alone come up with effective counter-strategies, the challenge of the farmers' movement, the backward caste mobilization, and the Ayodhya/communalism project. The Congress system lost its legitimacy, efficacy and bite.

The strength of Zoya Hasan's analytical narrative is that she keeps coming back to the overarching theme of the debilitating toll the Brahmins took of the UP Congress, and it was this factor alone that opened up space for casteist and communal politics. She paints a damning picture of the Brahmins' total domination: "While nationally Indira Gandhi succeeded in identifying the Congress with the interests of the poor and the low castes, the state and district leadership of the Congress in UP became more of a Brahmin affair than ever before. In 1964, Sripat Misra's ministry was dominated by Brahmins and Thakurs. Of the 112 district magistrates and police chiefs in the state's fifty-four districts, the number of Brahmins was 44 compared to 30 before Mishra took over. Similarly, the number of Brahmins who were chairmen and managing directors of the forty public sector undertakings in the state had risen to 25 from 18. Nearly 70 per cent of the Indian Administrative Service and Indian Police Service officers in 1980 were members of upper castes, while 52 per cent of the Provincial Civil Service were drawn from the same castes. The upper echelons of the bureaucracy were even more noticeably dominated by Brahmins who had been actively promoted by successive Brahmin chief ministers of the ruling Congress party." No wonder the party was found lacking in credibility when it pretended to be an advocate of an "all-inclusive", non-sectarian model; its very heavy Brahmanical baggage simply did not allow it the necessary flexibility to

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challenge the ideology of casteist appeal and communal discourse.

The Congress failure in Uttar Pradesh is all the more glaring because, as Zoya Hasan points out, there was not much of a political space for the BJP till the end of the 1980s. Except for making some inroads among the Ahirs and Kurmis in eastern and central UP, the BJP had yet to carve out a viable political constituency for itself. Unlike in Madhya Pradesh or Rajasthan, the BJP was not the principal challenger to the Congress dominance; it was the Janata Dal which had cobbled a powerful coalition of the OBCs and the Muslims. "The important point is that the 1989 election did not reveal strong evidence of a Hindu vote in UP, despite the attempts of leading political parties to marshal support along those lines," writes Hasan.

The space for communal politics got created by the shoddy practices in statecraft in Delhi and Lucknow. While at the national level the Rajiv Gandhi regime took recourse to "pragmatic communalism", as Zoya Hasan describes it, the Janata Dal at the national and state levels simply could not summon the Administrative adroitness and political imagination to deal with the middle classes' violent disquiet over the Mandal initiative. "Mandal made more obvious the divisions and tensions within UP society. It was designed as an instrument of mobilization for the recognition of competing claims to power. Not surprisingly, it invited the most serious opposition from the advocates of political Hinduism." But it was the inept handling of violence that contributed "enormously to the delegitimization of the social justice platform", especially among the middle classes—the teacher-trader-lawyer-provincial civil servant nexus perfected by the BJP.

Compared to the uncertain tactics of the Congress and the Janata Dal, the BJP displayed considerable political innovativeness in diverting the anti-Mandal anxieties into the pro-Ramjanmabhoomi movement. For example, the BJP did not "openly condemn reservations for fear of losing its OBC base which was quite strong in UP. This mobilization was overtly anti-Mandal in western UP, but not so in eastern UP where reservations were a popular issue among the OBCs. The BJP weaned away from the Janata Dal the Kurmis and the Lodhs in central UP through the Ramjanmabhoomi agitation. In addition, it increased their representation in party leadership. As part of this strategy, it gave greater prominent to Kurmis and Lodh leaders—Vinay Katiyar from Faizabad and Kalyan Singh from Aligarh. The vertical divisions between Yadavs and Kurmis and Lodhs helped the BJP to stave off the challenge posed by the apparent cohesion of backward (sic) under the Mandal platform."

To its traditional appeal on the Hindi-Urdu controversy among the urban middle classes in the new medium towns, the BJP grafted the Ayodhya sentiment. Taking full advantage of the VHP mobilizational efforts, the BJP instigated the "political Hindu" sentiment, leading to the elaborate Hindu-Muslim violence. Attributing to the BJP leadership a deliberate policy of communal violence, Zoya Hasan notes perceptively that "riots created a deep wedge between communities and invented a political constituency for the BJP in towns such as Khurja and Bijnor where it had very little support before the riots of 1990... Communal violence enlarged the BJP's political base." The Hindi press played the role of a cheerleader as the BJP propagated "the ideology of exclusion" as well as actively and joyfully participated in the "demonization of Mulalaym Singh Yadav."

Like a master story teller, Zoya Hasan comes back to the original argument: the response of the upper caste-class coalition to the exacting demands of participatory democracy. "These classes, located in moffusil towns across the state, are themselves the product of economic change, but they are uncertain and apprehensive of further social transformation and fearful of the upsurge from below which could upset the status quo. It is uncertainties of this class that have been manipulated by the BJP in its pursuit of political power." And she makes a convincing case that while "there is no doubt the BJP reaped rich electoral dividends from the Ayodhya movement, its main appeal was to the insecurities of the upper castes who were willing to switch support after the decline of the Congress dominance to the BJP."

The story of the Congress decline, the failure of the backward castes to retain the upper hand, and the triumph of the BJP's communal project is a fascinating tale; Zoya Hasan has told the tale with analytical clarity and without the mandatory jargon. The only deficiency in the book is the rather perfunctory treatment of the rise of the Bahujan Samaj Party. Still it is a book that ought to be read by every serious student of Indian politics, especially by those in the Congress who think that the restoration of the Dynasty would restore the party to the centre-stage of national politics.

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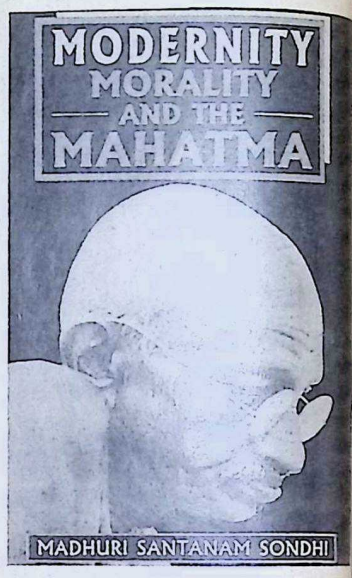
For A Better Civilizational Model

Rohini Mokashi Punekar

MODERNITY, MORALITY AND THE MAHATMA

By Madhuri Santanam Sondhi

Har-Anand Publications, New Delhi, 1997, pp. 244, Rs. 395.00



Madhuri Santanam Sondhi's Modernity, Morality and the Mahatma is a deeply interesting study of the interface between western modernity and the modern Indian nation-state on the one hand and the Gandhian model of traditional decentralized local bodies of governance based on dharma on the other. The book is an impassioned plea for rethinking the paradigm that has governed Indian society and politics since independence, particularly since it seems to have failed in creating a shared discourse of ethical norms. The scope of the work is huge, straddling as it does, several kind of ethos contained in the East-West encounter over the past couple of centuries.

Beginning with an examination of modernity in the West the first chapter proceeds to look at the problematic of modernity in the Indian context: the impact of science and technology, the problems of democracy, nationalization and the nation-state and the loss of cultural and moral authority. Modernity assumes the centrality of the individual and it is with colonization that modernity seeped into Indian society, mainly through education and technology. The Indian middle classes 'who were both its creation and its apologists used their education to lead the national movement against the Raj and carried over the principles of individualism into the Constitution of independent India'. While modernization was welcomed by all parties, Left or Right, it was only Gandhi who mistrusted it and advocated a decentralized model based on traditional bodies of local governance, such as the panchayats an a primarily agrarian economy. This we researched chapter sees how 'Indi modernization has failed to take de root since it has no basis in receive culture unlike modernization in E rope which evolved out of religio questioning. As a result of the unsu ability of climate or the arbitrary way transferring a part of the packag modernization in India has resulted 'instrumentalism in interpersonal rel tions and casteism', corruption, ineffi ciency and apathy, the old order br ken and no new order in sight.

The second chapter 'The Gandhia Point of Departure' is an exhaustiv discussion of Gandhi's political ph losophy. Morality is the fulcrum which it rests and Sondhi points out relation to knowledge: in the Gandhia sense knowledge would mean a chang in perception, an illumination. There an excellent discussion on Gandhi an Socrates, usefully counterpointing th philosophical traditions of the East an the West. Both see the equation be tween knowledge and virtue, but wit

> "Independent India has suspended Gandhi, like Trishanku, midway between heaven and earth: he is debarred from serving as a role model since he is assessed as a super-normal human being (*generations to come will scarcely believe that such a man walked the earth—Albert Einstein*); at the same time he is not a proper deity, an *avatar*, and so has become for most a sterile icon. Returned to earth in his full humanity, however, he can become a creative dialogue partner. New political and social circumstances warrant new experiments, bearing in mind the Gandhian lesson that to be successful, politics needs to be normatively structured within the overall civilizational framework."
>
> From *Modernity, Morality and the Mahatma*

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entirely different emphases: Gandhi as a step to right political action, Socrates content to prod change at the level of thought. While the examination of Gandhi's political concepts such as ahimsa, dharma, satyagraha, swadeshi and sarvodaya are deeply interesting, the recognition of some of the contradictions/areas of dissent emerging from them is equally thought-provoking. For instance, the challenge of finding the balance between the morally responsible (dharmic) individual with the space required for his conscience and the demands of cooperative community life. But by far the greater problem is Gandhi's perception of caste. To retain varna but reject jati is to invite difficulties of praxis, even assuming the acceptance of the basic premise of varna. Gandhi approved of the cohesion in village communities which came as a result of varna, but deeply disapproved of the hierarchy and ritual that jati enjoined. If it is the acceptance of structural inequality that holds communities together can the solution lie only in altering the perception and practice of inequality (as Gandhi believed) without structural changes? Such radical changes endanger community cohesiveness—as is happening today. There is no easy solution. But the examination of western modernity, concludes Sondhi, does bring home the urgent importance of building communities.

The third chapter looks at two of Gandhi's contemporaries and their perhaps more philosophic attitudes to modernity, namely Aurobindo and B.K. Mallik, in an attempt to place Gandhi in the context of his times. Parts of this chapter are fascinating; the analysis of Mallik's ethics of abstention is particularly good. If Gandhi's non-articulated basic assumption in the concept of Satyagraha is the inevitability of conflict, Mallik advocates abstention from conflict, since there can be no absolutist position. 'No absolute value is self-justifying and its adoption is the result of necessity—the practical necessity of finding a workable thesis for organizing society. Mallik, in a way, looks forward to post-modernism, specifically the recent theories on dialogue as a way of resolving conflict and enabling complete communication. His philosophic-evolutionary theory of history, moving through large circular macro-schemes too forsees the post-modernist breakdown of meta-narratives.

The last chapter, where Sondhi considers Gandhian alternatives in ethical dynamism for a future society seems to rework considerable areas from the previous chapters—a sense of weariness is inevitable. Modernity, one may be excused in feeling, cannot, in all rationality, be everlastingly the villain of the piece. Had the chapter attempted to examine the creative encounters between Gandhian thought and modernity (after all Gandhi did appreciate the space available to him as an individual to negotiate with authority) it might have done more in the way of establishing meaningful connections for the help of the present and future societies.

The book could have been organized more ruthlessly: the depth of research and the writer's obvious commitment to the cause have perhaps lengthened the study and made repetitions inevitable. The production could definitely have been better—the proof-reading has been lax to say the least. These are, of course minor charges. What really matters is the significant connections the book has managed to make for all of us in this last decade of the twentieth century and its timely reminder of the importance of Gandhi for a better civilizational model.

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It is because Gandhi's understanding of religion was so deeply embedded in notions of universal truth and morality that he confidently reversed the modern separation of religion from politics. Modernity treats religion as conventional sectarianism, and substitutes for it a humanistic ethics in the public sphere. This is not least the result of the European experience with its peculiar history of Christian governance and schismatic wars. Despite the fact that modernity's secular philosophy has failed to definitively establish ethics, this traumatic past is a constant barrier to recovery of religion in the public sphere. As a born Hindu, on the other hand, Gandhi was heir to the civilizational complexity of Hinduism, in which individual, caste, social and conventionally religious norms all interpenetrate and reflect one another through the prism of *dharma*. It is extremely difficult in such a society to search for hard and fast divisions between the religious and the social. One may quote the common truism that Hinduism is a way of life, rather than a religion reserved for weekends.

From *Modernity, Morality and the Mahatma*

Terrorism:

Strategy of the Weak Or a Calculated Option

Ved Marwah

TACKLING INSURGENCY AND TERRORISM: BLUEPRINT FOR ACTION

By Col. Bhaskar Sarkar VSM

Vision Books, 1998, pp. 156, Rs. 280.00

The book under review covers too large an agenda to adequately discuss the main issues raised by the author. Sarkar makes a number of controversial statements, but neither substantiates nor discusses them. They are not based on any study or research, but on his personal convictions. Nor does he draw from his own experience in handling problems of terrorism and insurgency. Sarkar was a military engineer by profession. The book has been written more in the style of a handbook for training army officers than for general reading. The author tends to oversimplify complex problems. A book on a subject like this from a retired army officer raises high expectations, but this one is likely to disappoint both the army officers and lay readers. The author has nevertheless done a service by publishing this book and focussing attention on this important subject, which is not getting as much attention as it should, either from the government or from the informed sections of society.

Col. Bhaskar Sarkar, VSM (Retd)

Sarkar has rightly emphasized the fact that terrorism and insurgency cannot survive without the support of the people. Terrorists need public support "to obtain supplies, money, shelter, recruits and intelligence". It is this support which has to be neutralized if counter-terrorism strategy is to succeed. And this objective cannot be achieved, as Sarkar rightly points out, if the security forces by their overzealous actions themselves alienate the people and thus generate sympathy and support for the terrorists. But the statement that "terrorism is the strategy of the weak" is debatable. Terrorism can, and often is, a deliberate and calculated option exercised even by a strong enemy. It offers many advantages over the other options. It is not only cost effective as compared to conventional wars, but also gives the sponsors the advantage of denying their involvement, and thus warding off the hostile reactions of the international community. Another advantage is that unlike conventional wars, low-intensity surrogate terrorist wars are always fought in the enemy's territory without any apparent risk to their own people.

Sarkar's point that state terror never pays is a valid one. The use of such methods by the state cannot be justified. They should never form part of a counter-terrorism strategy. They can be counter-productive in the long run. "Torturing suspects for information, harassment through detention without sufficient cause, destructions of food stocks, imposition of collective fines and reprisals in the form of looting, burning or raping for attacks on the security forces" cannot be justified on practical, legal or moral grounds. Apart from giving the country a bad name, the use of such methods can alienate a large section of the population and destroy the morale and discipline of the armed forces. But the author appears to be ambivalent in his thinking. At more than one place in the book he is very complimentary to the former Punjab Police Chief, K.P.S. Gill. He gives him all the credit for controlling the situation in Punjab, but does not discuss Gill's strategy and methods to combat terrorism.

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No one can disagree with Sarkar's suggestion that "action against organized crime and their illegal private armies must be the first step in containing and crushing insurgency and terrorism", but the only step that he suggests, that is to raise the penalty for possession of illicit arms to life imprisonment, is not likely to achieve the desired objective. This commonly-held view is based on misperception and betrays ignorance of the way the criminal justice system operates in our country. In criminal cases where the penalty is very high, the general tendency of the courts is to grant acquittals, because they demand in such cases a much higher quality of evidence. The result is that they tend to give the benefit of doubt to the accused and acquit him. Enhancement of the penalty seldom acts as a deterrent. This fact has been amply demonstrated in the case of drug-traffic cases. The enhancement of punishment in the amended Act has had little or no effect on the use of traffic in drugs. What acts as a deterrent is the certainty of punishment, and not the enhancement of punishment.

The author has devised a novel scorecard method to analyze various ongoing insurgencies and terrorist movements in India. The score card contains marks for factors like popular support, quality of leadership, military efficiency, internal unity, equipment, terrain, and availability of sanctuaries. These factors are, no doubt, relevant, but the manner of allotment of marks under each head lacks objective basis. A subjective assessment, as done by the author, can be more misleading than helpful in analyzing the situation. His analysis of the problem in different parts of the country, particularly in Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir is not very convincing and, apparently, not based on practical experience or study and research.

Sarkar makes a rather sweeping statement when he says that "if civil administration is unable to handle the task it should be handed over to the army". He does not appreciate the complexity of the task and the difficulties the army would face if it were to take over all the responsibility of the civil administration, even if it is for a short period. His suggestion that the army commander should directly function under the Chief Minister is not a practical one. Again, he has not thought through his suggestion that "when the army is deployed, it will have to control over state police and paramilitary forces". He does not discuss the practical problems of such a unified command, like the army is at present facing in Assam. The work-culture of the police and the army is so different. The problem of coordination will not be solved by the so-called unified command.

While discussing the surrender policy for the terrorists, Sarkar makes a suggestion which no civilized government can accept. The hardcore terrorists "can be forced to commit suicide or killed in fake encounters". He does not discuss the pros and cons of such a policy, and calls it an "effective though hardly civilized" policy. His definition of the hard core: "those who join the organization on ideological or personal considerations", is inadequate and unacceptable. But the author has rightly emphasized that there is no quick-fix solution to terrorism and insurgency. "Excessive emphasis on quantitative and quick results are generally counter-productive as it alienates the population".

One of the weaknesses of the book is that even though some data has been given, at no place is the source cited. One hopes that the data is based on reliable sources and not on the subjective assessment of the author. His suggestion of establishing a "college for counter-insurgency and anti-terrorism warfare" is a sound one, but one cannot understand why he insists on its establishment only in Madhya Pradesh. Maybe Sarkar has sound reasons for choosing Madhya Pradesh, but he does not take the reader into confidence about his reasons.

One of his many controversial suggestions is the regrouping of villages to tackle terrorism and insurgency. According to the author, "the measure is extremely unpopular, but it is perhaps the only effective way of denying support to militants in the sensitive border area of Jammu and Kashmir". He acknowledges the fact that the measure failed to achieve its objective and had to be abandoned in Mizoram, but he does not discuss how it is going to succeed in Jammu and Kashmir, where resistance from the local population will be even stronger.

The book ends with yet another controversial suggestion. He makes a rather well-meaning suggestion that special courts should be constituted to try those accused of terrorist and secessionist act. But he goes further and makes the suggestion that the judges for these courts should be hired from abroad so that their impartiality cannot be questioned. He does not discuss the negative implications of his suggestion.

The book is overpriced and hastily written. It leaves the reader dissatisfied. Moreover, the many repetitions in the slim volume could have been avoided with better editing.

Ved Marwah is Senior Research Professor at the Centre for Policy Research, New Delhi.

Addressing Discrepancies Between Empiricism and Theory

R. Gopinath

MEANINGS OF AGRICULTURE

Edited by Peter Robb

Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1996, pp. 389, Rs. 495.00

Social science has perceived its subjects through a set of methodological conventions and stereotypes. The resultant lack of fit between theory and empirical reality and between the terminology of our disciplines and that of its subjects has led to a continuous process of methodological revisions. This collection of twelve essays edited by Peter Robb on meanings of agriculture in South Asia addresses this very conundrum—the discrepancies between empirical descriptions of South Asian agriculture and generalized theoretical assumptions about agrarian change and policy.

The three issues around which the volume is organized are the kinds of knowledge relating to agriculture, the 'kinds of agriculture' or to use less fashionable terms the organization and relations of production and finally the different purposes of agriculture. After providing a critical summary of each of the contributions, Robb returns to the vexed problem of relating the wealth of micro-details with that of general theory. He is careful not to discount the significance of either for both historical reconstruction and policy formulation. Robb once again repeats the dictum of modern historical scholarship that local empirical circumstances must continually modify the larger theories of change. One common point which emerges from the present collection written from the vantage points of large generalizing formulations and those emphasizing detail, according to Robb, is that prescriptions of market economics do not relate to the actual experience of most Indian cultivators; "...to apply them is to run the risk of, at best, serious dislocation and suffering, whether or not they improve the Indian economy" (p. 33).

The first article on archaic forms of agricultural knowledge in South India by David Ludden tries to show how the terminologies of agriculture changed in the course of the classical, medieval and colonial periods. The general argument of movement being from heterogeneity and multivocality to a universalizing 'scientific' discourse with the growth of commodity production and the increased intrusion of the State in the countryside in the colonial period. This a theme which has been dealt with earlier, particularly by Nicholas Dirks discussion of changing terminology and early colonial 'scientific' mapping of the Tamil country. Ludden assumes that the differences in the incidence of presently available agricultural proverbs are positively correlated with actual variations in agricultural knowledge in different regions. This assumption seems to be a bit hasty and rash given the large gaps in our access to locally generated historical artefacts.

Benedicte Hjejle takes up a theme somewhat related to Ludden's concern in her discussion of Indian and British conceptions of agrarian Vishakhapatnam and the changes that occurred in agricultural production during the period of transition to Company rule. Based on very rich empirical information she first argues for a variety of land use patterns in Vishakhapatnam focussing on the historical significance of local agrarian controllers in the wider agrarian economy. She highlights the role of marginal land in the region's agriculture, the ecological determination of land use, the role of local land controllers, and the susceptibility of early official statistics to manipulation. Her main point is that the intervention of Company rule led to the displacement of traditional land controllers by new groups—non-agricultural groups of merchants and officials resulting in social fragmentation and declining agricultural productivity.

On the question of commercialization in Indian agriculture, Binay Bhushan Chaudhuri provides a carefully nuanced criticism of the models

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The three issues around which the volume is organized are the kinds of knowledge relating to agriculture, the 'kinds of agriculture' or to use less fashionable terms the organization and relations of production and finally the different purposes of agriculture. After providing a critical summary of each of the contributions, Robb returns to the vexed problem of relating the wealth of micro-details with that of general theory. He is careful not to discount the significance of either for both historical reconstruction and policy formulation.

'forced' commercialization and price driven change based on the experience of indigo and in eastern India. Chaudhuri argues that the different trends within the agricultural historiography of Indian agricultural commercialization have inadequately stressed the distinctive peasant perceptions in this context. Highlighting peasants' perceptions according to him serves as a check to the biases of explanations based on relative price movements and 'forced' change. He is critical of these explanations as they have misrepresented the process of change in some crops and have erred in taking peasant dependence on dominant groups as an immutable fact. On the question of 'advances' Chaudhuri makes the important point that their role varied for different crops. He also points to the fact that in this discussion, consumption loans and production loans of peasants tend to get confounded and the existence of multiple sources of credit made forcing of advances on a dependent peasantry more problematic. The emphasis on peasant manoeuvres to increase their share in a context marked by subordination permits introducing of variations and movements in connection between conjunctions of market forces and possibilities for changing configurations of agrarian power, a theme not examined by theories of 'forced' commercialization.

Another contribution on a similar theme is Rajat Dutta's examination of the 'dynamics of peasant production and agrarian commercialism in eighteenth-century Bengal'. Dutta emphasizes the point that agrarian commercialism in Bengal can be understood only from the standpoint of regionally integrated market. He sees the Bengal rice cultivators' behaviour to be in tune with the attributes of a rational profit-maximizing peasant. Peasants responded positively to relative prices and so did tenurial relations move in tune with agricultural output and price changes. The limits to peasants' choices and the varied role of intermediaries and sharecroppers in responding to prices could have been elaborated profitably.

Eric Meyer's discussion of varied cultivation regimes and peasant strategies raises the central question of how the Kandyan peasant negotiated dramatic changes in the region's agriculture with the opening up of plantations. Meyer highlights the various purposes which different lands within a village were put to and how this pattern was disrupted under colonial rule. Both the colonial state and later nationalist discourse privileged paddy cultivation over *chena* or 'slash and burn' agriculture. It is argued that this misunderstanding of the role of *chena* and settled cultivation led to a number of tensions including the ethnic conflict in the north and east Sri Lanka. Meyer provides a good discussion of how different strategies pursued by the various groups and their outcomes were premised upon their respective understanding of agriculture.

Another paper that focuses on the disruptive effects of colonial intervention on the village economy is the Sivakumars' study of long term change in the agrarian society of Tondaimandalam. Embellished with the terminology of recent institutional economics the paper argues that colonial rule forced a disjuncture between local and external production contexts. The site of transaction costs and power were removed from the village to the State. This process initiated under colonialism continued into the post-independence period. The Sivakumars' assert that with the growth of centralization, external forces broke down communal arrangements for village level production leading to the impoverishment of agricultural labour and slow economic growth. The authors describe in detail the ties of interdependence between employer and employee, the close connection of this system of economic production with the caste and belief systems and the available resources. However, in their description of pre-colonial structures' interdependence, for instance, the ritual of managed employer-worker disputes and their reconciliation, one gets the impression that structures of 'dependence' and exploitation tend to have received less attention than required.

Three other papers by Ravi Srivastava, Karin Kapadia and Sumit Guha deal with different aspects of agricultural labour. Srivastava looks at agrarian transition from the vantage point of systematic changes in the labour process in two villages in western and south-eastern Uttar Pradesh. The case study brings out clear contrasts in the landlord-labour relations in the more and less developed villages. In the faster changing village, landlords have resorted to switching to piece-rates and letting land seasonally to poor families. Closer landlord control over production and the mechanism of debt have been used here replacing older forms of employer-employee relations. In the more traditional and less dynamic village dominance, subordination and extra-economic coercion continue to play an important role in labour dynamics. The main point made in the paper is that 'surplus appropriators may make use of existing modes of surplus appropriation in very different ways, leading to different outcomes' (p. 249).

Sumit Guha's paper on the meaning and measurement of labour in Indian agriculture sharply disputes analyses of Indian agriculture based on homogenous notions of labour-time. Guha deconstructs agricultural work distinguishing between those involved in the different operations and the varied nature of work itself. His main point is that 'labour-time would be a very imperfect measure of work done in Indian agriculture. . .' (p. 260). Instead, he proposes that labour inputs be measured in terms of units based on actual or imputed cost for different kinds of labourers. Despite the limitations of this method, Guha considers this vastly superior to attempts to measure labour time.

Karin Kapadia studies labour contracts and female labour in a village in Tiruchi district of Tamilnadu. She observes a shift from time rates to piece rates. This shift is associated with greater exploitation, lower supervisory costs and a tendency towards an apparent self-disciplining among piece-rate workers.

The last two articles are very different from the rest of the contributions. Written by economists they look at the significance of international ramifications and hegemonic external linkages for Indian agriculture. Utsa Patnaik's paper on peasant subsistence and food security in the context of the international commoditization of production is a sharp indictment of colonialism and its parallels in the contemporary context.

Patnaik first argues that 'expanding exportables to meet the market demand of the North is at the expense necessarily of lowering domestic absorption in poor tropical countries' (p. 291). Forced commercialization, falling per capita food availability (in the context of a switch from food to exportable commercial crops), high revenue demand in cash, unilateral transfers of wealth from India and extreme food insecurity are some of the features offered to explain colonial Indian agriculture. Finally, it is argued that 'structural adjustment policies' under World Bank-IMF supervision that insist on increased agro-exports have actually led to falling per capita food production in poor countries. Patnaik's discussion of the colonial economy could have paid more attention to historical variations and detail. On page 302 she writes that the long run shift from staples to exportables and a declining trend in per capita food availability aggravated by the deteriorating international terms of trade in the inter-war period provided for a 'pre-famine conjuncture', i.e., 'increased vulnerability with larger numbers of rural classes in poverty. . . 'If this indeed was the case, then how does one explain the trend decline in mortality after 1921 (or slightly earlier if we disregard the excess mortality caused by the influenza epidemic) in India?

In a well-argued paper on agriculture and liberalization, Abhijit Sen critically evaluates the prescriptions of the World Bank for agricultural growth in India. Like Patnaik, Sen also sees gloomy prospects ahead for Indian agriculture. Increased prices, slower output growth and greater income disparities are foreseen if India continues on its World Bank dictated path of structural adjustment.

In the 1950s and 1960s, economic and social historians were attracted by more or less determinist models of historical explanation. Today, however, it has been replaced by models which emphasize the freedom of choice of ordinary people, their perceptions, their strategies, their capacity to exploit the inconsistencies of social and political systems. The majority of articles in this collection make an important advance in this direction.

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Crying for Milk

I. Qadeer

MILK, MONEY AND MADNESS: THE CULTURE AND POLITICS OF BREAST FEEDING

By Naomi Baumslag and Dia L. Michels

The Other India Press, Goa, 1995, pp. 256, Rs. 175.00

The Other India Press has done a commendable job in bringing out this 256 page, neat, well-illustrated and equally well-argued book entitled, *Milk, Money and Madness: The Culture and Politics of Breast Feeding*. The authors, Naomi Baumslag and Dia L. Michels, have chosen to deal with a very peculiar type of madness. Madness that spurts thoughtless destruction and callous disregard for innocent lives through market forces that measure value only as money.

In an atmosphere of uncritical acceptance of any and all medical advice, this book is a reminder that human history helps us to locate technology and professionalism in their proper context; that often destruction of traditional practices is not the result of their lack of value for human survival, but because they hinder the forward march of capitalism. Divided into three main parts, the book deals with some critical issues related to breast-feeding. The importance of these is pointed out by Richard Jolly, who commends the authors' efforts in his Foreword. The first part of the book, "Breast-feeding: Beliefs and Practices", reviews people's perceptions and practices, both at present and in the past. It unravels the variations in child rearing and feeding practices in traditional societies and

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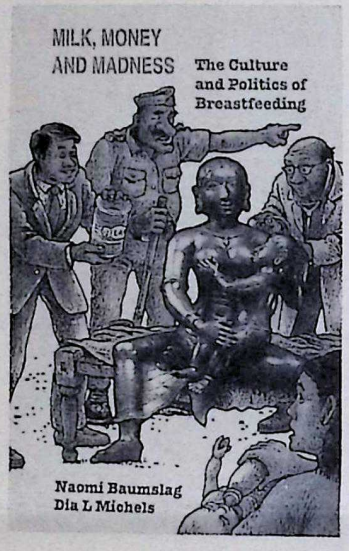
Even for those who are familiar with the debate, the book has some surprises. It is interesting, informative, and thought-provoking. Its use of rare paintings and photographs from museums and libraries not only provides lucid illustrations but also substantive evidence. It should be read by all, specially those involved with caring for babies, personally or professionally.



their common concern with breast-feeding. It also deals with the nature of transition in this singularly critical practice that contributed to human survival and the ensuing problems in the contemporary West. The authors contribute at two levels. Firstly, by showing the social significance given to breast-feeding till the 18th century, they forcefully bring forth the fact that it was the most natural, effective, valuable and simple way of caring for babies for a very long time; that distortions and doubts regarding its feasibility and effectivity are not even a century old. Secondly, the practice of artificial feeding evolved not for babies who had mothers but for those who had lost them.

Phenomenally high infant mortality of the 17th and 18th century was not simply due to poor public health. The young mothers from the poor classes abandoned, neglected, or handed over their own babies to foundling hospitals to be able to seek out jobs as wet nurses. The women from the elite classes, on the other hand, gave up breast-feeding in order to fulfil their social and wifely duties. The notions of beauty and sexuality got interlinked with virgin breasts and the advantages of feeding their own babies were ignored, as wet nurse became easily available. The 18th century foundling hospitals, meant to take care of the poor and abandoned babies, thus became the infernos where recorded mortality was as high as 80-90 per cent. It was this that became the inspiration for manufacturing formula food for babies. The book shows that though social and technological evolution of the 18th and 19th century expanded the scope of "possibilities" for women, the choices given to them did not include work along with nurturing their infants.

The second part, "Breast Milk: The Miracle Food and Medicines", is a collection of evidence that shows the superiority of breast milk and sets it apart from all other artificially prepared or "humanized" milks. The most important feature that the authors emphasize is the specificity and the live nature of breast milk. Its variation with time of the day, maturity and need of the baby, its immunologically protective nature, its richness in cellular content, easy assimilability of fats and proteins makes breast milk unique. The authors rightly point out that the fear generated by the possibility of transfer of toxins or infections through breast-feeding may be real but it is a part of the general risk that we generate for ourselves by destroying our environment, and not the process of breast-feeding itself. The authors also discuss the value of breast-feeding for maternal health: an extremely valuable dimension that is mostly neglected and distorted into "a negative nutritional impact", which again, is more a creation of poverty rather than breast-feeding.

The process of commercialization of infant feeding is then reviewed. Starting with companies producing formula food for foundling hospitals in the 18th century, it soon became obvious to the entrepreneurs that they could push the markets further. Thus, first the elite and then the newly emerging middle classes, became their targets. The milk industry not only became a lucrative business, it also expanded into providing alternative containers. The evolution of a feeding bottle and the rubber nipple has an equally revealing history.

The first two parts of the book, though useful, leave some space for avoiding repetitions and further consolidating evidence. At times the line between perspective and evidence becomes thin. Also lacking is a consistent analysis of the past and present of specific regions and the linkages over time, as the text moves from one part of the globe to another.

Part three, "Breast Milk Economies: Shaping Corporate and Governmental Policies", highlights the industry's relentless search for markets and profits. When the markets in the West were

In an atmosphere of uncritical acceptance of any and all medical advice, this book is a reminder that human history helps us to locate technology and professionalism in their proper context; that often destruction of traditional practices is not the result of their lack of value for human survival, but because they hinder the forward march of capitalism.

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won or the users began questioning the formulae, attention was turned to the weak and more gullible countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America where banned and unpopular products were easily dumped and sold. A major boost to their sales in the West was the public health revolution which brought down infant mortality and provided a cover up for the harm that artificial feeding did. Evidence is presented that in France, in just one region, infant mortality could be brought down to zero between 1893 to 1903 by strictly banning all propaganda and promotion of artificial feeding.

In this process of commercialization of infant survival, a key role was played by medical professionals. They converted exceptions into rules, used their authority and power to manipulate and consistently refused to look at evidence or initiate research in desirable directions. This great partnership between the industry and the "learned men to protect babies from foolish unlearned women" performed two functions. It shifted responsibility away from single practitioners involved in preparing artificial feeds for babies under their care. When a baby on formula food died the physician could no more be held responsible, as now the mother prepared the formula. Secondly, the formula sold carried no labels or directions for use except for advising its use under medical supervision. Hence, infant feeding was medicalized without the medical profession being responsible. With the invention of refrigeration, means of transport, storage, better handling and finally pasteurization, the hold of this partnership became stronger. The most obvious common sense knowledge was subordinated to the interests of a few. Sufficient evidence is produced by the authors of this link between doctors who ran Milk Stations of the late 18th and early 19th centuries and the companies

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that produced formula feeds and supplementary foods.

There were, no doubt, exceptions among the medical professionals who practised differently and promoted breast-feeding. They had to struggle against arguments of "liberation of women" and their "modernization", free samples provided by the companies, and liberal aid of food supplements in the name of child care! By 1970 however these activists were able to consolidate themselves to fight the famous case against Nestle's and start working towards the WHO code for baby food. The book offers a fascinating account of the arguments and counter-arguments, the politics behind the scenes, and the mechanisms of manipulation adopted by the all-powerful industry. The fact that the saner voices won and the WHO adopted a code in 1981 is certainly not the final step and the struggle must continue to translate this guideline into legislation and widespread practice. The authors focus on the prevailing conflict between the social necessity of breast-feeding and the dilemma of a nursing, working woman who is given no social support or security to pursue this practice. The Scandinavian countries have taken the lead in this matter but the others are far, far behind.

In the Third World, the penetration of market forces—into all regions and all domains of social and personal life—only increases the dangers. The urban areas are the first to succumb but, with increasing urbanization, migration, the expansion of communications, and a class of medical professionals bred on the supremacy of technological knowledge, the rural populations are also becoming vulnerable. The authors argue that, when in the West 25–40 per cent of the GDP is contributed by the labour of women involved in households (as assessed by market cost methods), this proportion will be higher for women in the Third World. Offering them work security during pregnancy and lactation, therefore, should be part of the employer's responsibility.

Even for those who are familiar with the debate, the book has some surprises. It is interesting, informative, and thought-provoking. Its use of rare paintings and photographs from museums and libraries not only provides lucid illustrations but also substantive evidence. It should be read by all, specially those involved with caring for babies, personally or professionally.

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The Unmaking of Genocide

Niranjan S. Karnik

THE RWANDA CRISIS: HISTORY OF A GENOCIDE

By Girard Prunier

Hurst & Company, 1995, pp. 389, (PB), $ 13.50

During his recent tour through Africa, US President Bill Clinton officially apologized on behalf of Americans and the international community for failing to recognize the genocide that was occurring in Rwanda during 1994. As an observer of this region and a critic of US policy, I must confess to some degree of shock and anger with the President. During his March 25th speech in Kigali, Clinton claimed that "we did not immediately call these crimes by their rightful name: genocide. We cannot change the past. But we can and must do everything in our power to help you build a future without fear, and full of hope."[1] Nice words but lacking in some degree of sincerity given the tour's intent and the Administration's past decisions regarding Africa. First, one of the purposes of Clinton's trip to Africa was to build new trade links with a region of the world where the US has little or no economic contact. France and the European colonial powers have historically had strong trade connections with Africa especially Francophone Africa.

Second, White House spokespersons in May 1994 "were instructed not to use the word 'genocide' in referring to Rwanda."[2] Both through the threat of Security Council vetoes and strategic denial, the Clinton Administration avoided getting involved in Rwanda and even prevented the label of 'genocide' from being used at several levels.

The natural inclination might be to look to international statute for definitions of genocide and see if and how Rwanda's case might or might not fit the definitions.[3] Such a course, while potentially useful and productive, is unlikely to resolve the issue. The Clinton Administration's power to deny a genocide by fiat demands another approach—one which recognizes the dynamics of power and the role of history. In looking for a good history of the Rwandan tragedy perhaps the best and most complete source can be found in Girard Prunier's *The Rwanda Crisis: History of A Genocide*. Prunier, originally a specialist on Uganda, was driven to this work by witnessing the tragedies that befell his friends in the region and the need for a comprehensive history of events in the region.

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Beginning with a brief discussion of the precolonial period and continuing forward through the events of 1994, Prunier expertly teases out the major factors which brought about the conditions which enabled the genocide. Early in this book he shows how Belgian colonial authorities transformed Rwanda's governance and social structures to favour certain groups. Throughout his discussion the terms Hutu and Tutsi continually appear as important tribal, ethnic, and political divisions. While the American media became fixated on the tribal aspect of the conflict, Prunier depicts events more complexly by showing how political motivations turned some members of a tribe against their own members. In reading this far more nuanced portrait of events it becomes clear that these tribal labels do not represent some "pure" ethnic demarcations and instead are group terms which have been mediated by generations of colonialism and political influence. These terms still have a great deal of veracity and power but this does not mean that they contain some essential explanatory value in and of themselves.

Prunier also traces the complicity of countries like France and Uganda. Moving against the academic and nationalist grain of his home country, France, Prunier details the ways that the French armed and supported the Hutu regime. He shows how the Hutu government leaders appealed to France's fears of Anglo-American cultural and economic domination of Africa. Members of the French government came to see the Uganda-supported Tutsi exiles as drifting toward the Anglophone world and thus threatening French interests in the region. Clinton's trip seen in this light may be either a victory tour for the Anglophone world and/or a new threat to France. In the wake of the Cold War, will these new regional economic rivalries between allies be the cause of civil unrest? Only time will tell.

On 6 April 1994 a plane carrying the Presidents of Rwanda and Burundi was shot down on its return journey from a peace meeting. This event marked the beginning of the most recent cycle of violence in Rwanda that resulted in nearly 1 million dead and in excess of 2 million fleeing into asylum. One of the lessons we learn from Prunier is the key role that refugees and diasporas play in the events of Rwanda. He shows how civil wars in the 1960s and 70s, and unrest in the 1980s and 1990s caused successive waves of migration which scattered Rwandans across the globe. Later these diasporas funded, armed, and in many cases returned to directly participate in military actions against the reigning regimes in attempts to reclaim the country or at least parts of it.

This is not to excuse the governments which led Rwanda. In their own way they discriminated against certain groups and fed dangerously volatile sentiments into the populace. Senior government officials misused international development and humanitarian aid to line their own pockets and further impoverished the country. In addition, the government actively jailed political dissidents, and ordered executions in defiance of international human rights standards which further marginalized the groups they feared.

As comprehensive as Prunier's book is, there are still some stories which get

1 Clinton, William, "Clinton's Painful Words of Sorrow and Chagrin," *The New York Times*, March 26 1998: A12.

2 Weiner, Tim, "Critics Say U.S. Ignored C.I.A. Warnings of Genocide in Rwanda," *The New York Times*, March 26 1998: A12.

3 Desthexe, Alain, *Rwanda and Genocide in the Twentieth Century*, (New York: New York University Press, 1995).

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While the American media became fixated on the tribal aspect of the conflict, Prunier depicts events more complexly by showing how political motivations turned some members of a tribe against their own members. In reading this far more nuanced portrait of events it becomes clear that these tribal labels do not represent some "pure" ethnic demarcations and instead are group terms which have been mediated by generations of colonialism and political influence.

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only scant attention. For example, the Canadian economist Michel Chossudovsky[4] has shown how the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), working in concert, removed all the economic safety net programme in Rwanda's agricultural sector. A 1980s downturn in the coffee market then plunged much of the country into famine and terrible desperation. These events while not directly leading to genocide did lay a basis for it to thrive.

Prunier's history is thus a history of major actors—individuals, political parties, and governments. These are perhaps the most salient actors to examine in this genocide but they are hardly the only actors. Many other forces play into the activities of Rwanda, some from quite far. The increasingly globalized world has a dark side in which the mild mannered economic decisions in Washington and policy positions in Paris can affect a small country in central Africa. As one looks more closely at the aftermath of Rwanda it is clear that these actors sitting in distant offices can produce these effects due to their relative power. They even have the ability to deny that a genocide is occurring as a million people die.

[4]Chossudovsky, Michel, "Economic Genocide in Rwanda," *Economic and Political Weekly*, April 13 (1996): pp. 938–41.

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Two Colossi of Indian Industry

Sanjaya Baru

THE JOY OF ACHIEVEMENT: CONVERSATIONS WITH J.R.D. TATA

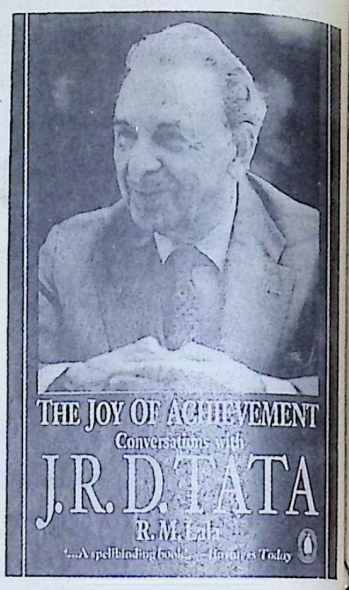
By R.M. Lala

Viking Penguin India, 1995, pp. 190, Rs. 190.00

GODREJ: A HUNDRED YEARS, 1897–1997: VOLUME 1

By B.K. Karanjia

Viking Penguin India, 1997, pp. 264, Rs. 295.00



All great personalities in Hindu mythology and Indian history have been depicted as complex characters—men of virtue and vice, wisdom and pettiness, gracious and jealous, sacred and profane, spiritual and materialistic. Even Maryada Purushottam Ram is shown to have human frailties, sometimes wimpish and given to self-righteousness. Bhagwan Krishna is an altogether human person, wise and cunning, generous and mischievous, just and libidinous. When great sages, poets and historians have never worried about portraying our Gods and Kings as morally complex beings, why do mere biographers of businessmen insist on hagiography?

Whether in Gita Piramal's *Business Maharajahs*, or in R.M. Lala's biography of J.R.D. Tata (*Beyond the Last Blue Mountain, 1992*), or the biographies of Lala Shriram, Seth Walchand Hirachand, G.D. Birla and so on, we are always offered one-dimensional perspectives of patriotic businessmen, talented entrepreneurs, hard-working corporate citizens, creating wealth, doing their nation proud, building business empires, living civilized lives and concerned about humanity and the future of man. What about all the corporate wars, the clash of tycoons, the cutting of corners, the No. 2 accounts, the unions bashed, the politicians bribed, and the women seduced? Businessmen are human beings. They work while they work—sometimes hard, sometimes not—and play while they play—sometimes with the boys, sometimes with the girls—and that's the way they stay healthy, wealthy and gay.

Give us a break, Mr Lala and Mr Karanjia. We are sure the Godrejs and the Tatas, like the Birlas and the Ambanis, are extraordinary people and have done a lot of good for their businesses, for the nation and for mankind. But biographies become interesting when they give the smooth with the rough, the sweet with the bitter, the hurrahs with the punches. Neither book under review does justice to their undoubtedly great personalities.

We now know from Mr. Lala's latest offering (*Conversations with J.R.D. Tata*) that the late J.R.D. Tata did not want his biography published in his lifetime. JRD was ostensibly being modest, but presumably he also felt an honest account would stir controversy. Biographies of eminent people should be expected to for they would have lived a complex life and taken many a difficult decision becoming heroes to many but found wanting by some. No one lives a life which when revealed to all will not embarass someone or the other, apart from the person concerned. The best biographies have always been the most controversial ones.

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There is no doubt that India has been home this century to some of the most dynamic, enterprising, and forward-looking businessmen in the world. This may sound odd in the current "Bombay Club" siege atmosphere in which even the tallest business leader is worried about foreign takeovers and competition. But the era of the "Bombay Plan" was a distant cry from the present phase of the "Bombay Plea". Indian businessmen walked tall, battled adversity and played on distinctly non-level playing fields.

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Mr. Karanjia's story of the Godrej family begins on a personal note. He informs us that his acquaintance with Godrej dates back to his father's friendship with Pirojsha Godrej. He and Sohrab Godrej became friends when they 'jointly' brought out a twelve-page supplement in *The Times of India* (September 1955), "recording for the first time the early struggles of Godrej against the entrenched British interests and Godrej achievements in diverse

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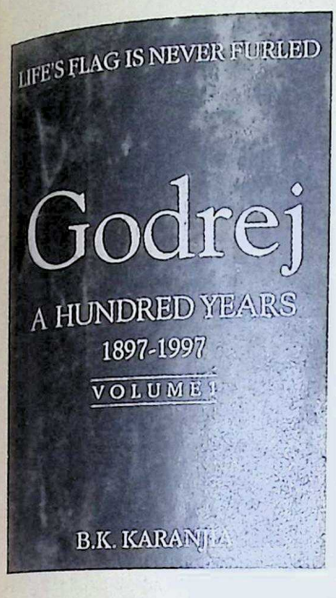

fields. "Mr Karanjia is honest in informing us that this effort won him a job with the Godrej's as a Publicity Manager, a job he retained for six years till he joined the Times group as editor of *Filmfare*. Four decades later, it is not 'editor-journalist' Karanjia who has written this book, but the old 'publicity manager' who has done so.

Karanjia offers adequate flavour of the pre-Independence days and of the entrepreneurial skills of the Godrejs as well as their links with the leadership of the national movement. The swadeshi angle is an important element of Karanjia's first volume since it deals with the first and second generation of the Godrejs. Ardeshir Godrej's friendship with Gandhi, Tagore and Tilak is mentioned in passing but nothing of substance or political news-value is mentioned about these friendships.

Leafing through the private papers of Seth Walchand Hirachand, now accessible in the archives of the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, I came across a letter written by Karamchand Thapar to Babu Rajendra Prasad (later India's first President), in September 1940, which stated: "In May 1940 under instructions from B.M. Birla I had sent you a cheque for Rs. 5,000 to enable you to help the sugar industry in whatever manner you might think best. I have advised the Indian Sugar Syndicate office to send you another cheque for Rs 5000 which I hope you will be receiving very soon." Indian businessmen of that period, like subsequent generations, extended financial support to politicians in the name of swadeshi and national interest. At one level the friendship between business leaders and political leaders was an elevated relationship which strengthened the national movement. At another, it was a mutually beneficial relationship which neither really liked. The flavour of this contradiction doesn't come out in Karanjia's book though in Lala's book we get more than a glimpse of JRD's dislike for politicians.

Karanjia is entirely correct in emphasizing at the outset the power of the Godrej brandname. For generations of Indians the Godrej steel almirahs, the locks, the soaps and the typewriters are household names. So is the Tata name. The market for a book on these business groups, like any of the other big names should be substantial but these sugary accounts devoid of all spice are unlikely to enthuse too many readers.

It is easy to see from these two volumes that JRD is a very much more colourful and entertaining personality, compared to the Godrejs, and his life can be the subject of a racy novel. But Mr. Lala's politeness prevents him from giving us more than a mere glimpse of the private life and inner thoughts of 'Jeh'.

Consider just one telling example. In the Preface itself Mr Lala tells us that JRD was "no saint". "He had a glad eye for the ladies." Later he quotes JRD saying (p. 94), in response to complaints about his smoking, "All right, I don't gamble, I don't drink, I smoke, but *I don't womanize more than others*. So the easiest thing is to give up smoking." (Emphasis ours) Lala also tells us JRD's favourite joke about Lord and Lady Linlithgow (p. 39). On a visit to a stud farm, Lady Linlithgow was impressed by a bull which had 'performed all 365 days of the year'. "Go tell His Excellency" says Lady Linlithgow. When informed of the bull's prowess, Lord Linlithgow asks "What! With the same cow?" "No, sir" he is reassured. "Go and tell that to Her Excellency". Together, these anecdotes add up to offering us a rather colourful portrait of the handsome 'Jeh'. A ladies' man, who only complained (p. 94) that he has an "exaggerated reputation of a Casanova", ought to have got a better deal from his biographer than the bland statement, "But he did say to me that although his reputation as a playboy was an exaggeration, he had not lived as the Bible wanted him to live." Biographies and accounts of private conversations need more masala.

The mellowing of JRD comes through very clearly from the various anecdotes he recalls. In Darjeeling for his honeymoon in 1930, JRD was annoyed about being made to wait on the road for an hour to enable the Bengal Governor's motorcade to pass. When the motorcade arrived JRD jumped onto the road and shouted: "Who the hell do you think you are, keeping five hundred people, women and children, in the cold for an hour? You damn fool!"

In July 1993, months before he died, he went to Hyderabad at the invitation of his 'oldest living' friend, Kira, to inaugurate her Montessori Research and Training Centre. He was made to wait for 45 minutes at the venue because the state's minister for education, P.V. Ranga Rao (the wayward son of the then Prime Minister Narasimha Rao) arrived late. Lala, who accompanied JRD, felt JRD may be annoyed by this affront but was struck by the graciousness with which he received Ranga Rao.

Moving from the private to the corporate, we get a good account of JRD's impatience with the politics of Nehru and Gandhi, his dislike for Morarji and his admiration for Sardar Patel and Jayaprakash Narayan. But not a word about what JRD thought of fellow businessmen or other members of the Tata family. We know that he appreciated Ratan Tata's "integrity, memory and energy" ("Ratan has everything I want for the firm"), but we know little of what he felt about the rivals and how they fared against Ratan on these scales. We get nuggets of interesting information but nothing more. We are told that Ratan was "somewhat annoyed" when JRD said he wanted to consult Ajit Kerkar about naming Ratan his successor and was relieved to discover that what JRD wanted to find out from Kerkar was the "auscpicious date"! A Parsi corporate tycoon consulting a Hindu about an 'auspicious date' for anointing his successor! Kerkar advised Monday, 25 March (1991). Which calendar did he consult?

JRD was a great Indian and richly deserved the Bharat Ratna that the Narasimha Rao government finally conferred on him in 1992. JRD himself valued the Dadabhai Naoroji Award more than the Bharat Ratna (p. 128) because of Naoroji's commitment to women's education, a cause dear to him. JRD was a modernist, an institution builder and a true Indian. Agonizing over the destruction of the Babri Masjid, JRD reportedly asked Lala: "I cannot understand how erecting a temple is more important than building a great literature or making India into a prosperous and peaceful country."

One or two biographies cannot capture the full flavour of the life of men like JRD. Hopefully more will be written and of more such corporate leaders, and they will tell us all—the pains and pleasures, the virtues and vices and the fulfillments and failures of big businessmen who are, after all, mere mortals.

Sanjaya Baru, is an economic journalist who currently hosts Crossfire *on Doordarshan Metro.*

MANOHAR

NEW BOOKS

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This pioneering work caters to the needs of both the specialist and the general reader.

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An Unbonded Explorer of Frontiers

Tulsi Patel

SEEMANTON KE ANVEKSHAK SHYAMACHARAN DUBE

Compiled and edited by Leela Dube and Sudheesh Pachauri

Vani Prakashan, New Delhi, 1997, pp. 255, Rs. 250.00

In this montage comprising thirty-one contributions and a candid but intensely personal introduction by Leela Dube, S.C. Dube (SC now on) emerges as a pioneering anthropologist/sociologist, a lover of literature, a critic with an insatiable appetite for inquiry and knowledge, an effective communicator and an imaginative and fearless academic and administrator of outstanding courage of conviction. This tribute released on his first death anniversary is a collection of memoirs, assessment and evaluation of the multi-dimensional personality and work of SC spanning over five decades. The book is divided into three parts: memoirs, lectures and articles by SC and a few of his interviews published in Hindi newspapers and journals. It is through the lenses of the contributors, based on parts of their lives spent with SC (and his writings) that an alive, socially responsible and rich life presents itself to the readers. Amidst these varying personal memories are reflections about SC's roles as a scholar, teacher, intellectual, writer, administrator, friend, guide, neighbour and relative except for a couple of personal biographical pieces (one of them by Sumati Mutatkar, the noted musician) the contributors are senior social scientists, litterateurs, critics, journalists, philosophers, bureaucrats with social commitment and a few upcoming scholars. The book begins with a brief biographical sketch of SC, whose life began in 1922 in Madhya Pradesh. Early loss of his mother and his subsequent dialogue and friendship with books carved him as an adolescent writer in Hindi magazines, an interest which continued throughout his life. It was perhaps his preoccupation with folklore and tribal social life in the *adivasi* surroundings of Chattisgarh that made him turn to anthropology after a brilliant career in political science. *The Kamar*, the monograph on shifting cultivators and food gatherers brought him international acclaim. Followed by *Indian Village*, his work paved the way for a two decade long period of village studies in Indian sociology.

SC's pathbreaking work, *Indian Village* was followed by his foray into the study of planned change. The anguish of community development in its various dimensions remained throughout his life. Over a dozen books from him were rooted in contemporary Indian social issues. From the tribal soil and sensibility of Chattisgarh, SC moved on to understanding and writing on *India's Changing Villages*, to *Modernization and Development: The Search for Alternative Paradigms*, penetrating thoughts on *Tradition and Development*, and *Indian Society*. SC's concern for tribal society, especially of Madhya Pradesh (MP), his home state, his teaching, research and administrative experiences brought him closer to the grassroots as well as bureaucracy and the higher echelons of society and their functioning. His love for Hindi literature—which engaged him since early childhood continued all along. Namvar Singh's recall of SC's confession of the emotional attachment with literature is revealing and picturesque: 'Literature entered my life stealthily and stayed put there. This all-weather friend never separated from me'. He openly admitted the superior strength of a few insights in literature over a large scale survey report. His deep interest in literature coloured his intense grip over sociological issues. Many including the litterateurs in this volume have admired him for his courage in turning full time to writing in Hindi after retirement. In B.R. Chauhan's words, SC's shift from S.C. Dube to Shyamacharan Dube towards the latter part of his life was the result of a conscious decision and conviction. He was concerned about communicating with a much wider audience in India which is not Anglophone, a disability of sorts in the present times. He advised his colleagues in social sciences both young and not so young to write in their own languages so that standard literature in the discipline is made available in these languages, and to a larger community of sociologists. His *Indian Society* publi-shed by the National Book Trust and translated in various Indian languages was written with this specific purpose in mind.

From memories of some of his colleagues at the University of Sagar, Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla and in Delhi, his entrenchment in some of the traditional Indian values he cherished, woven with western ways and values comes across in an appreciative tone. With his effortless and sculpted use of exclusive Hindi and English, both in oration and writing, he did not restrict himself to sociology. He interacted actively with colleagues in other departments in universities, recall his students and colleagues. The title of the volume is perhaps based not only on his going across disciplinary boundaries, but also for neither being overwhelmed by traditional nor overawed by western thought (Girish Mishra: 132). He was not nostalgic about tradition. His committed intellectual personality is viewed as having a multi-dimensional contemporaneity. He stood on his cultural ground and rose up to an alert, interesting and analytical view of a broad international picture. His was the intellectual refusal of an imposed reality and a critical and objective look for indigenous thought, method and practice. His views on development alternatives insisted on a decolonized and yet not an untangled approach to understanding and policy intervention, particularly in the spheres of modernization, change and quality of life.

For him good theory depended on the possibility of its use and utility. In this light he preferred an uninterrupted contextualized research that was rooted and yet not parochial or traditional essentialist. Perhaps it is a composite view of all this that Mrinal Pande's very informed and incisive commentary portrays the pitiable plight of today's intellectual, removed from the common man, who writes and publishes in English, more prestigiously abroad. She is eloquent in expressing her surprise that some sociologists instead of bothering about altering this worrisome situation are advocating a distance from real life, its experiences and aspirations. They advocate saving sociology from moral solutions, in their efforts at making sociology rise above time and space. Mrinal Pande believes SC to be a spokesperson of complex social problems and their easy administrative solutions. We at Jamia had this experience: Once faced with the great unease of teachers in the Department of Sociology at Jamia in teaching some classes through Hindi and Urdu medium, he related his rewarding experiments of teaching, learning and writing in Hindi. The manner in which he related his experiences and disclosed his late resolve to reach more people by writing in Hindi inspired us to make sincere efforts in following suit. Shobhita Jain's piece reiterates these qualities.

The inadequate permeability of development of tribals brought him close to B.D. Sharma whose piece is the best illustration to negate the well-known and deeply entrenched chasm between academics and bureaucrats. P.C. Joshi's piece reveals his relationship with many of his contemporary sociologists. Without broadcasting his theoretical knowledge, SC could give incisive directions to set people towards serious questioning. Suresh Shukla's is a very balanced and close frame view of SC in the sociological world of Delhi, a sort of centre removed from the periphery. Shukla laments the insufficient use of SC's valuable and exclusive talent by the system in India, notwithstanding his administrative spells.

Both in his conduct and ideas, SC was free from regional, communal and caste prejudices. Nandu Ram's piece is eloquent on this. He had sympathy for the under-privileged and came forward with help at crucial times. Accessible to the younger generation, he was dear to several of the younger sociologists who have contributed to the volume. To Atal, Anand Kumar, Nandu Ram and Soumendra Patnaik, he was a father figure. He is known to seek out bright minds. What touched many was his interest in people's academic work.

Despite a near absence of neighbourhood culture in the metropolis, he had close and warm relations with neighbours (Pachauri). His sense of humour, love for and capacity to communicate with children was endearing. He greatly admired his literary friends. A great deal of exchange of reading material took place and resulted in interesting conversations around it. His understanding and evaluation of literature was so sharp that he was on the board of literary awards such as Jnan Peeth and Vyas Samman.

Sachidanand's lament is apt: The world listened with a lot of attention. alas, you left in the midst.

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Home of Man's Being

Some Observations on Language, Culture and Identity*

Nirmal Verma

To say anything about language is like trying to catch one's own shadow. Or to be more precise, we *are* its shadow, in which we embody the shifting identities of our self. It is an unending exploration, for man *qua* man can never define himself completely, once and for all. Not merely because there is something unknown or unknowable about 'man' but also because he is constantly making, remaking, unmaking himself, and for that reason cannot be treated as a 'finished product'. What shall be the stages and stations of his journey into the future (if he has any future at all) remains as mysterious and unchartered as ever despite the philosophical speculations made about it from Nietzsche to Sri Aurobindo and the predictions of the modern-day futurists.

This is not the place to discuss the veracity or otherwise of these speculations but one thing seems to be clear that these speculations—such as they are—arise out of deep dissatisfaction with the 'partial images' of man as they have been provided to us by history. We as human beings are perpetually tormented by a sense of incompleteness within us, which is further aggravated by a feeling that this incompleteness is more apparent than real, that in *reality* we were totally self-contained, a reality, which is deeply buried in us waiting to be excavated. Like a sentence half written on a page, we try to decipher the erased part to 'complete' its meaning.

Language is perhaps the most effective tool for such a task of 'self-excavation'. In it is reflected man's image not in its fragmented parts, but in its *totality*, not what he *is* but what he *could be*; it uncovers the potentiality inherent in his being. This act of 'self-uncovering' gives him a unique status, distinguishing him from the rest of the living beings. The uniqueness of a culture lies not in its historical reality which is bound to be distorted by external pressures, but in what it dreams out to be, in its *ideality*.

If language plays such a crucial role in the self-identification (Atma-bodh) of a culture, it is because it makes man aware of the dark roots of memory or a chain of memories, which constitute his *tradition*, his special way of looking at the world—and also at himself—his self in the world. If by some catastrophic act of collective amnesia we forget everything about our past, but our language survives then not much is lost, because through language, the past would still be flowing within our present, resonant with all the racial memories, *samskaras* and mythical associations. Language is the most hopeful guarantee against *forgetting*. No wonder, the totalitarian regimes of our times were so eager to suppress the voices of its writers and poets, for their writings were the surest safeguard to preserve the memory, which they, the tyrants, were so eager to destroy. In this sense, language is a double-edged weapon; it is not only an instrument of communication, but also the bearer of truth, which is an integral part of its cultural heritage.

A culture seeks and discovers its truth, its 'essence' in the particular *order* of meanings inherent in the structure of its language. It is through this order we interpret the 'reality' of the world. The extent to which the members of a cultural group get disinherited from their linguistic moorings, either by some external intervention or inner displacement (in colonized India, both were inter-related) their perceptions of reality get dim and distorted. Man depends upon the perceptions of things as language presents them to him. It is this which among other things distinguish the human languages from the mere 'sounds of communication' found in the animal world. The 'animal language' is chiefly governed by the immediate impulses of fear, hunger, sex and once they are satiated, they die away leaving no trace behind. Human speech, on the other hand, constitutes an order of sounds, which in the course of time, transcends the physical immediacy of the moment, acquiring a stability and solidity of words, which arranged in a certain order, unfold a whole world of meanings related to the human condition. As primitive man builds an image of god at a site where some miraculous event occured and the image continues to be worshipped by the succeeding generations, even after the memory of the miracle is lost, so also words are the bearers of archetypal memory. The 'momentary gods', whose meanings outlast their immediate context. Myths are to the language what gods were to the primitive man, both transform the ephemeral event into an everlasting symbol.

Here we come in contact with the twin aspects of language—one which we speak with one another, its functional aspects, the other which lies beneath its surface, its *essential* spirit, which is constantly echoed in the subtlest forms in the spoken words of everyday speech. What we speak, in different ways, reflects the essential, the invisible 'messages' of the underground world. In the insightful words of Heidegger, "Speaking is a kind of inner listening; it is listening to the language we speak. We speak by listening to what language tells us. And we are able to hear what language says only in so far as we are in our very essence taken up into the essence of language belonging to it." Perhaps this is most manifestly true in a poem, for we hear *that* in the words of a poem which the language unfolds in its essence. "Language in its essence is the still stream that writes, while itself generating them, its two banks, what it *says* and our speech echoing that."

It is precisely this inner 'essence' of a language which determines the directive gaze of a people, a distinctive mode of apprehending reality. Each language happens to be the 'home of man's being', from which different communities, cultural groups, religious sects seek and derive their basic source of nourishment. Thus there is no such thing as one language, but many languages, each different from one another not only in their sound patterns and grammatical structures, but in their *world-view*, in their basic perceptions of reality, in their conception of man, nature and gods. As the eminent philologist, philosopher W. Von Humboldt says, "Each language draws a magic circle round the people to which it belongs, a circle from which there is no escape save by stepping out of it into another."

As it is difficult to visualize the European civilization without the Greek and Latin languages and the classical mythology related to them—both are so intimately interwoven with each other—so also Indian civilizational identity is indelibly stamped by the ancient *puranas* and epics created in Sanskrit which left such a profound ever-lasting imprint on the Indian psyche. Apart from its familiar historically documented past, so manifestly ascertainable, a people also has its 'inner past' which like an invisible stream flows beneath its consciousness. Language, as it is reflected in the myths and epics, provide the clue to unlock its secret universe. The words denoted for sun, fire, water and sky in *Rgveda* evoke a kind of response from a Hindu mind, which is very different from the associative memories which these words have in Greek and Latin languages. Human languages are born in the same world, but each language has a world uniquely its own. When we translate from one language to another, then we not only translate the words, but through words, the entire cultural baggage of the language has to be 'transported' to another language. "Thus when we set out to learn a new language, we have the impression of approaching a new world... it is like a voyage of discovery in an alien land and the greatest gain from such a voyage lies in having learnt to look upon our mother tongue in a new light". As Goethe so perceptively said "So long as we know no foreign language, we are in a sense ignorant of our own, for we fail to see its specific structure and distinctive features".

A comparison of different languages shows us that there are no exact synonyms; corresponding terms from two languages seldom refers to the same objects or actions. As the eminent Sanskrit scholar of Harvard University, Dr. Witzal points out "Many words in Sanskrit as well as in other languages cannot be rendered by a single good translation of the term e.g. the concept encompassed by the term '*Rt*' is in fact quite similar to the equally untranslatable term 'dharm'. Modern usage of the word 'truth' does not envisage all aspects of the term *Rt*... English or German have no word expressing the combination of concepts carried by the term '*Rt*.' which *is an active realization of truth, a vital force which can underline human or divine action* (Emphasis added).

What Dr. Witzel says about the Rgvedic term '*Rt*' equally applies to concepts like *Atm, Brahma, Sat*, etc.—the list is endless—which don't have any satisfactory equivalents in other languages. In order to make these seminal concepts of Indian philosophical and

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religious tracts accessible in languages other than Sanskrit, it is necessary to illuminate the entire traditional context, from which they acquire specific meanings, their *world-view*. Failure to do this may lead not merely to the serious misreadings of the ancient texts, but total misrepresentation of the essential *philosophical vision* and cultural ethos embedded in the seminal terms of these texts, as was regrettably done by many European orientalists and philologists. The well-known art historian Anand Coomaraswami has drawn our attention to the deplorable consequences of such mistranslations. In the introduction to his book on *Hinduism and Buddhism*, he writes:

> "Brahmanism or Hinduism is not only the oldest mystery religion or rather metaphysical discipline. . . but also perhaps one of those that has survived with an unbroken tradition that is lived and understood at the present day by millions of men. Nevertheless. . . it would be hardly an exaggeration to say that a faithful account of Hinduism might well be given in the form of categorical denial of most of the statements that have been made about it, alike by European scholars and by Indians trained in our modern sceptical and evolutionary modes of thought."

Arguing against all the popular, platitudinous notions of the western scholars, Anand Coomaraswami further points out that Vedic doctrine is neither "pantheistic nor polytheistic" that *Karma* is not fate except in the sense of character and destiny that inhere in created things themselves which determine their vocation. He further illustrates his point by referring to the populist misconceptions about the term 'Maya' which is not 'illusion' but rather the world of appearances by which we may either by enlightened or deluded according to the degree of our maturity". Such examples of misreading and mistranslations can be multiplied, which only goes to show what types of distorted images of Indian culture and tradition were made available to the West during the last two hundred years. All Indo-European languages belong to one family, but each language, over the centuries, has acquired its own specific cultural intonation. As Humboldt points out, "Even in languages closely akin and agreeing in the general structure, we do not find identical names. The Greek and Latin terms for the moon, although they refer to the same object, do not express the same intention or concept".

In recent years the term 'secularism' has become a subject of passionate controversy in India, precisely because, torn from its European context, its application to Indian polity seriously upsets the age-old relation between '*dharma*' and '*Rajya*' (State). The literal translation of the term as '*dharmnirpekshta*' has little relevance in a society where '*dharma*'—as distinguished from the Semitic term religion—is inextricably interwoven with the entire fabric of life embracing both its secular and non-secular spheres. In sharp contrast to the post-renaissance Europe, there was no clear-cut demarcation between the 'religious' and 'secular' in the Indian tradition, dharma being the sole arbiter of man's actions on the earth. This is one among many instances, how the imposition of an alien concept can lead to artificial divisions in a society where in actual reality no such divisions exist. One can well imagine how in a colonial context, such gross misunderstanding of linguistic concepts, leads to something more than mere intellectual confusion, it creates an unbridgeable gulf, between what people traditionally believe in and what they are forcibly required to practise. It creates a schism within the consciousness alienating the people from their understanding of 'self'—a malaise from which India is suffering even after fifty years of Independence.

It is interesting to note that what Coomaraswami had said earlier about the colonial distortions of the East, was later more than corroborated by the German philosopher, Heidegger, who calls it an ongoing process of the "Europeanization of the Earth". It is this, according to Heidegger, which causes numerous misunderstandings of the Eastern cultures. The Indian philosopher, J.L. Mehta, who was also a close associate of Heidegger quotes him. Dr. Mehta writes:

> "After returning from Europe, a Japanese philosopher gave a series of lectures on the aesthetics of art and poetry, in which he had tried to explain Japanese art with the help of European theories of aesthetics. Heidegger is reported to have objected to this. "Is it right to depend on European principles of aesthetics to explain Japanese art?" He said, "Both the name and concept (of aesthetics) originated from the Greek concept of 'philosophia'; consequently its basic conceptual structure would remain alien and unfamiliar to East Asian modes of perception. Why do you have to take guidance from Europe for this?" The Japanese scholar said in answer, "It is because from European philosophy, we get those concepts in the light of which we could understand the essential features of our poetry". "Do you need 'concepts' for this?" Yes the Japanese scholar replied. "After coming in contact with the western modes of thought, we find a certain deficiency in our language, a lack of capacity to delimit material phenomena, so that by putting them in a 'former' and 'latter' order it could visualise them in a monoscemic synthesis". In reply, Heidegger said, "Do you really regard this 'deficiency' as a shortcoming of your language? Is it at all necessary for you to run after western concepts? If you do that then will it not result in your failure to make a distinction between your view of reality and that of the western world, each having a distinctive form of its own and thus closing the doors of any authentic dialogue between them?"

At the end the Japanese scholar had to admit that the infatuation with western concepts would necessarily lead to the devaluation of the richness of the linguistic concepts which the Japanese have inherited from their own tradition.

One could add to this another interesting incident about a German, who was translating Lao-tze, who once asked his Chinese friend "I don't understand, why Chinese speak in this way?" to which the Chinese scholar answered "because the Chinese hadn't read Aristotles' Logic at that time". At which Heidegger exclaimed "Thank God they hadn't read it!"

It seems to be a matter of common experience that when we express our thoughts in a language other than our own, then the thoughts themselves start getting governed by the conceptual apparatus of that language. Language, in that case, does not remain merely a passive medium, but tends to acquire an autonomous power, an effective instrument of force. We of course express our thoughts in that language, but *only in the manner, in which it would permit them to be expressed.* In the words of Dr. Mehta, "it is the question of the domineering power of that language that what we want to say, we cannot express or express in the manner, in which that language would like us to say".

This is an important statement to which Indian writers, scholars and translators should give serious thought for it is they, the ruling westernized intelligentsia over whom the English language had such a "domineering" influence and who have been, as the Japanese scholars, blindly infatuated by European concepts. Do we not find ourselves in an unenviable situation when we express ourselves in a foreign language, whose conceptual structure pulls us in one direction, while our own cultural experience pulls us in the opposite direction? In such a situation of 'linguistic displacement', the national identity of a people itself comes under a shadow—a shadow, which is not merely confined to the elitist classes but since Independence, has enveloped a large mass of people.

It, however, seems to be too simplistic a thesis to put the entire blame on western scholars, as Edward Said does in his book *Orientalism*. It is of course true that they arrived at very wrong conclusions by their occidental bias, but was it also not the fault of the eastern thinkers and scholars, who in their intellectual sensibility accepted their 'evidence' as conclusive, without questioning the validity of their conceptual categories? Profound thinkers like Sri Aurobindo and Ananda Coomaraswami, who advanced such a critique, radical and illuminating as it was, were almost totally ignored and marginalized by the 'mainstream secularist' institutions of their own academic world. Even Edward Said preferred not to mention them (if he knew of them at all) even though his famous book was written almost half a century after their work was already available in print.

But let me return for a moment to the reference of Aristotle's 'Logic' in context with the native of oriental languages. It is a matter of common knowledge that

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the formal structure of these languages where reason or rationality play an important part is very different from those languages which are more deeply oriented to the metaphorical view of the world. Here philosophy and poetry are not divided in separate compartments, but more or less tread the same ground borrowing their 'images' from a symbolic reality which in its multi-layered richness, is far more *inclusive* than the one guided by logical categories. In Indian tradition particularly, the terms like *'atm'*, *'Chitt'*, *'manas'*, *'sat'* *'drishti'* *'darshan'*—just to mention a few—have a rich 'ambiguity' about them (As Empson uses the term) for they carry within them an invisible (not abstract) universality of concepts as well as the poetic potentiality of the metaphor—a heady mixture—which was so effectively exploited no less by the Rgvedic seers than by their worthy successors, the anonymous authors of the epics and later by the medieval saint-poets.

There could be several factors responsible for the difference between the logical and metaphorical structure of languages, into which I will not go here. I would only like to draw attention to two important facts; firstly, the approach to 'time' which a tradition has, its time consciousness, seems to play a very significant role in determining the 'inner form and rhythm' of a language. The myth-oriented languages, carrying a metaphorical view of reality are usually rooted in a tradition which believes in the cyclic motion of time, with the eternal recurrence of events in its circular movement. It is not the same 'time' which moves in unilinear direction, determining the historical progression of events—the western notion of time—which came to be accepted in Europe after Augustine. Time which sanctifies 'history' is not the same time which is sanctified by myth. The distinguished Hindi poet and essayist 'Agyeya', made some fine observations in regard to the relation of specific notions of time with the modulations of language in a literary work. He writes:

"By accepting the (western) notion of historical time we have brought in a certain rigidity in the construction of our sentences. So long as we retained our awareness to the circular movement of time, we preserved a kind of flexibility in our language which we were forced to abandon. We began to accept certain sentence-structures as unalterable, which would resist any kind of deviation or disruption. If the linguistic structure of 'New Poetry' (Nayi Kavita) seems to be less elastic and more stultified, is it not because its awareness of time is very strongly tied up with its unilinear movement?"

Man's awareness of time and—his specific mode of apprehending its movement, is intimately linked with his relation to nature. It is often seen that in those traditions where nature is not regarded as a hostile force, eternally the 'other', an object of conquest and subjugation but something which is a part of 'extended self' a reflection of what is innate in man—his 'human nature' as it were, then the role of the language also undergoes a radical change. More than a mere means of communication, it acquires a magical aura in-charged with its own inner light. By becoming 'symbolic' in its essence, it demolishes the duality, which history has imposed upon it, it becomes identifiable with the totality of man. In such traditions as Northrop Fry so illuminatingly says, "Man and nature share equally in a common energy constituting an indivisible unit. But in societies where man and nature are divided into hostile categories, *there the metaphorical unity of the language begins to disintegrate*. Instead of the metaphor, now reason begins to dominate the language. In place of images, man now begins to create a language of intellectual concepts. *Categories of thought and imagination separating one from another, lose their metaphorical quality*, as it has happened with the languages of the western world, where under the aggressive domination of science and reason, man's relation to nature has been completely ruptured" (Emphasis added).

If in the Indian tradition, languages were able to preserve their "metaphorical unity", it is because man's relation to nature was always regarded as sacrosanct. As a traveller is able to find his way in the dark night by tracing the movement of the stars, so also Indians were able to identify their 'place' in the world in the light of their age-old myths and symbols. As Auden so aptly said, "Symbols are like a stick in the hands of a blind man, by which he gropes his way on this earth". In Indian languages one witnesses the rare synthesis of stillness and movement, where myths and metaphors remain the same through the ages but their meaning changes as time passes.

However, 'meanings' do not develop in a vacuum; they need a geographical space to constantly interpenetrate with the lives of the people who share the same 'home'. We cannot separate the symbolic character of a language from its 'natural' habitat. If in Indian language the symbols of trees, mountains, rivers are so potently metaphorical—it is because they are something much more than 'natural objects'—names like Ganga, Saraswati, Himalaya—carry within themselves the mythical allusions, the sacred memories of their ancestors. They bear the imprint of divine power. Ecological forces of nature are informed with iconic significance. The name *Bharat* is more than a country, it is literally what the word signifies, a "place infused with light", it was revered as *'deva-bhoomi* (land of the gods) and its language Sanskrit as *'deva-bhasha'*, the language divine. Names became the manifestation of the *'numan'*.

It is precisely these mythical memories embedded in Sanskrit and Indian languages which contributed so profoundly in enabling the Indians to retrive their self-hood—their awareness of belonging to a 'nation' with a common cultural heritage in the late 19th and 20th centuries. No one was more aware than the European Indologists and philosophers including Hegel and Max Mueller of this 'danger'. While on the one hand they discarded the Indian 'present' as nothing but the remnant of its glorious past, on the other hand they were also aware that so long as Sanskrit continues to be the medium of intellectual discourse, the civilizational identity of India could not be easily erased by Europe. Indian civilization, despite all the colonial depredations and cultural onslaughts of the West was still able to preserve its distinctive cultural identity; it could not be treated as a precious ruin of the past, like its Egyptian and Greek counterparts, beautiful and glorious but only as archaeological "treasures" fit to be locked within the museum walls. The national awakening of the Indian people, popularly known as the 'Cultural Renaissance' in the late 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries was an act of 'rejuvenation of its tradition through its languages. Not only did they make Indians recover the memory of their past, but opened channels to let the past flow in their present. The imperial official Macaulay was not wrong when he said, "we shall never be able to establish the domination of European culture in India unless we succeed in completely banishing the Sanskrit language from the Indian educational system". When in 1928, the Indian philosopher, K.C. Bhattacharya pointed out the significance of 'swaraj in ideas' as part of a self-liberating process, it was closely linked with the freedom to think and conceptualize in its language.

The idea of the 'nation state' is therefore not an 'artificial construct' as some of our more fashionable 'secularist' historians would like us to believe. (In their subaltern enthusiasm they are no different than their imperial predecessors who saw India as no more than a motley conglomeration of disparate religions, linguistic groups of communities). The underlying idea of the 'nation state' as it was made clear in the early writings of Gandhi and Sri Aurobindo was to recover the civilization unity of India which had been so badly ruptured and distorted by two hundred years of European domination. India becoming a nation was a natural flowering of an idea into a reality which involved neither violence nor destruction. In this it was very different from the aggressive intolerance of the European and American nation-states which came into existence only after uprooting millions of people from their native settlements. Today even the memory of their existence has disappeared. The Indian nationalism, in its origins had the spiritual foundations of a culture, where the various creeds and faiths could co-exist without ever becoming an obstacle to the idea of national unity.

Nirmal Verma is a Hindi writer who has published several collections of short stories and novels. His latest publication is a collection of essays, Doosre Shabdon Mein *(Bharatiya Jnana Peeth, 1997).*

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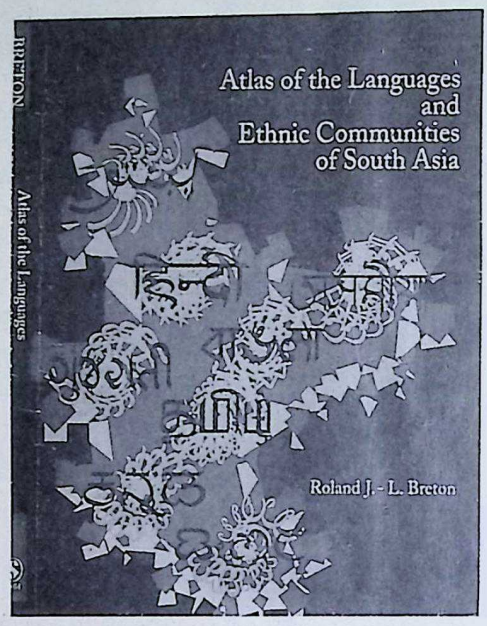
N.H. Itagi

ATLAS OF THE LANGUAGES AND ETHNIC COMMUNITIES OF SOUTH ASIA

By Roland J.L. Breton

Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1997, pp. 230 (including 60 plates, 5 tables, 1 language classification chart, select bibliography and subject and author index), Rs. 795.00 (cloth)



South Asia, a well defined geographical area with presently 1/5th of the human kind, and a cradle of one of the most ancient civilizations in the world with a common history was mapped excellently by Joseph Swartzberg (1978) in his *Historical Atlas of South Asia*. The present atlas under review—*Atlas of the Languages and Ethnic Communities of South Asia* (revised and enlarged edition of the one published first in French in 1976 with bilingual French-English maps) by Roland J.L. Breton provides a geolinguistic view—synchronic and dichronic—of the linguistically diversified South Asia based on the Census data, available for over a hundred years since 1881.

The atlas has two parts. "The first part introduces, on a discursive mode, the general relationship between language and ethno-cultural structure of the subcontinent. The second part aims at analyzing the regional distribution of language and ethnic communities through graphic exploration". The author claims that the plates (part - ii) do not merely illustrate the discourse (part - i) but are used as information processing figurative tools. But one also sees that the maps, especially the thematic maps of the type here are constructs of one's understanding or perception or imaginations of situation or phenomena i.e. maps are also the result of and just not result in understanding a phenomenon. Breton's understanding of 'Hindustani linguistic complex' as consisting of Hindi, Urdu and Punjabi (p. 18) is reflected in plates on the Hindi belt which includes Punjabi. It is generally understood by laymen as well as scholars that 'Hindustani' refers to the broad spectrum of a linguistic continuum with 'high' Hindi (Sanskritized) and 'high' Urdu (Persianized) at its two ends and the use of which as a lingua-franca was advocated by Mahatma Gandhi. 'Hindustani' included Hindi, and Urdu but not Punjabi.

In the first discursive part related to the general relationship between language and ethnocultural structure of the subcontinent, Breton observes that there is no strict one to one correspondence between language and other markers of ethnic identity such as race, tribe, caste and religion in the subcontinent and many a geopolitical problem arose as a result of the colonial and postcolonial search for regional conscience. He opines that a country like India has survived as a result of its ability to reorganize itself, further strengthening its democratic set up.

What undermines these observations is however the discursive nature of the text, at places very naive in interpretation especially of census data on mothertongue and bilingualism with reference to language maintenance and loss, non-technical use of phrases like 'linguistic area', 'language use', etc. which have come to have specific meaning in linguistic/sociolinguistic discourse, use of new and vague phrases like "parallel communities" at times odd sounding like "registered believers" and misunderstandings such as "cultural languages" as opposed to tribal languages and Persian as the literary language of Iqbal and Tagore, etc.

In the first discursive part related to the general relationship between language and ethnocultural structure of the subcontinent, Breton observes that there is no strict one to one correspondence between language and other markers of ethnic identity such as race, tribe, caste and religion in the subcontinent and many a geopolitical problem arose as a result of the colonial and postcolonial search for regional conscience.

A unique feature of the atlas is the depiction of languages both in terms of their geographical extent as well in terms of their number of speakers, either on a single map or several maps and graphs with common hatching patterns, mostly on a single plate, enabling easy comparison of the two.

"The second part of the atlas is made up of 60 plates including maps and graphs along with description and commentaries. The numerical data is also accommodated in the text and in case where it cannot be, it appears at the end of the plate series." "The first three plates cover the subcontinent: the following 33 plates display regional situations; 14 others deal with non-regional phenomena extending all over the subcontinent." These plates are largely based on 1961 census data but also make use of data from other censuses starting from 1881. The last 10 plates are based on the 1991 census.

The small scale of the maps, including those of the regional ones, coupled with district as the unit of data aggregation and depiction in case of regional maps, ensures greater generalization. The regional maps show languages within its physical environment to drive home the correlation between the two as for example the extent of Marathas and the Deccan Trap in plate 25 or the distribution of tribal languages in the hilly jungle tracks (plate 26). A unique feature of the atlas is the depiction of languages both in terms of their geographical extent as well in terms of their number of speakers, either on a single map or several maps and graphs with common hatching patterns mostly on a single plate enabling easy comparison of the two. The graphs employed are anamorphed maps, ethnograms designed to show—synchronically or dichronically—the size of a speech community both in absolute numbers as well as percentage of given population in a region and simple cartesian graphs. The atlas also has some other interesting and innovative techniques of cartographic presentation such as topological depiction of smaller languages outside of their geographical area or location (plate 58).

However, in some maps such as the one on Hindi mothertongue speakers on plate 11, two different and incomparable methods of representation—one as proportion of Hindi MT speakers in the districts outside of the Hindi states are employed, giving a split image of one phenomenon. In some cases two different scales are employed to depict one phenomenon on a map (plate 29) or in a histogram (plate 44). Therefore the maps and graphs need to be read carefully.

The plates, with the exception of a few, are based largely on mothertongue data ignoring the data on bilingualism and subsidiary languages. But multilingualism or plurilingualism is not the same as linguistic heterogeneity or linguistic diversity as implied in plate 50. No wonder Breton concludes his introduction to the atlas evocatively declaring, "May everyone who loves diversity enjoy this atlas." The atlas, though in black and white in this era of colour cartography, contains a wealth of information on language demography and excellent maps and charts based on it. It remains a pioneering contribution towards a geolinguistics of South Asia.

N.H. Itagi is Assistant Cartographer at the Central Institute of Indian Languages, Mysore.

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In Conversation with Nirupama Borgohain

—

Nirupama Borgohain is one of the best known women writers of Assam and one of the five women who have received the Sahitya Akademi Award for her novel *Abhiyatri* in 1996. She has published twenty-four novels and ten short story collections. Her autobiography *Through Belief and Doubt* written in the Assamese is presently in its third edition and has been critically acclaimed. She was awarded the Saraswati Award for her novel *Anyajiban* in 1987 and the Assam Sahitya Sabha Award for the same novel in 1990. Her award winning novel *Abhiyatri* is being translated and published by the Sahitya Akademi. Preeti Gill met her in Guwahati in April and the following are the excerpts of that conversation.

—

Preeti Gill: When did you first start writing and what attracted you to fiction?

Nirupama Borgohain: I contributed stories and articles to the high school magazine which I also edited. The stories and novels which I started to read from a young age expanded the horizon of imagination which inspired me to write my own fiction.

PG: What are the issues and themes you have explored in your own writing?

NB: The theme of my first published short story (which I wrote at the age of 13) was a kind of social rebellion. In the first story which was published by what you might call a standard magazine I focussed on the patriarchal, tyrannical subjugation of women in villages. Then I drifted to problems and concerns of middle-class life, something that invited the wrath of socially conscious critics! However, that was only a transitory phase and I did revert to the predicament of women and the downtrodden in my writing.

PG: What is the literary tradition that has influenced you and your work?

NB: Rabindra Nath Tagore has always been a profound influence and my earlier writing is dotted with quotations from his corpus. I think I belong to the liberal humanistic tradition, and have been influenced by writers such as Tolstoy, Victor Hugo, and Thomas Hardy. Dostoyevsky has also been an influence. But in my 'feminist' writings I have trodden the radical path too.

PG: Tell me about your awards—you are among the five Assamese women recipients of the Sahitya Akademi award. Please tell me about the novels that have won these accolades.

NB: The very first award I got was the Saraswati National Award from Bangalore. My novel *Anyajiban* was adjudged the best among works by women writers of the north-east states, Bengal and Orissa in 1987 by the jury for this award. Then I got the Basanti Devi award for the same novel in 1990, conferred by the Asom Sahitya Sabha. The Sabha presented me with the Hem Barua award in 1995 for my novel *Abhiyatri*. For the same novel I received the Sahitya Academy award in 1996.

The narrative in *Anyajiban* revolves round a young woman's quest for the truth behind the death of a village woman. It's revealed that the woman was dragged to her death over hard, stubbly ground by her husband. This novel is based on a true incident that occurred in my husband's village in upper Assam.

Abhiyatri is a biographical novel, based on the remarkable life of Chandraprabha Saikiani, who was born in a very backward village of Assam. Her untameable desire for education propelled her to the American Missionary School at Nowgong. Her firebrand nature was revealed there when she protested against the derogatory remarks of the American Sisters about the 'natives' and she made them withdraw those remarks. Then she taught in a school at Tezpur and also fell in love with Dandinath Kalita, a writer. However Dandinath Kalita did not marry her because Chandraprabha was a low-caste woman. As she became pregnant she had to leave Tezpur. She decided to bring her child up on her own. Later this child, a son, became a successful trade union leader and a Member of the Legislative Assembly of Assam. Afterwards she threw herself into the freedom struggle and also established the Assam Pradeshik Mahila Samiti, the pioneer women's organization of Assam. A true Gandhian, she roamed the whole state, establishing a destitute home, child and mother welfare institutions and working in the Harijan Colony. She is also a versatile writer, although a great deal of her writing remains unpublished.

PG: You said you are the only Leftist woman writer of your generation. What this has meant to your writing in terms of recognition you have achieved.

NB: I don't think I have received any formal recognition for this, rather I was deprived of many laurels by the establishment. However, many young intellectuals have given special attention to my writing because of its Leftist slant.

PG: Why is it that there are no English translations of your novels barring a few short stories published in some anthologies? Why is there a dearth of good translations of the literature emanating from Assam since you have such a rich and ancient tradition and a vast body of work available that the non-Assamese reader should be exposed to. Oriya literature is much better known, writers and poets have been translated into English, Hindi and other languages. Why does Assamese literature suffer from this lacuna?

NB: First of all, we must blame ourselves for not being enterprising in trying to focus our literature outside Assam. We also have the perception that people outside the north-east do not care to know about us. So what's the use of trying to project our concerns beyond our borders? There is also a dearth of good and willing translators. But the main cause is the lack of publishers in the language. Who would take interest in the output from this region? I had *Abhiyatri* translated but Penguin refused it. We also sounded *Kali for Women*, thinking that they might be the appropriate people for publishing this work about an extraordinary woman. But they did not even bother to respond to our queries in this regard, even after a reminder. You must admit that all this is rather disheartening.

PG: Since we cannot ignore the importance of the quality of translations if your literature (Assamese I mean) is to reach the outside reader, how can this lack be overcome? Do you see a way out?

NB: Professional translators will emerge when they know that there will be proper remuneration for them. If a writer knows that some reputed publishing concern outside the state is interested in her work, she can take the initiative for getting her work translated.

PG: What would be your reaction to the idea of setting up a publishing house to cater to this region i.e. the N.E. to publish good works in different subject areas working with good translators and to expose the local regional literature to a wider audience? Is there scope for this sort of venture?

NB: It's a good idea and there is a fair amount of scope for this kind of work. But once again the translators have to be motivated.

PG: What is the literary scene like here now and in your growing years? And how has this helped in your own writing?

NB: The scene has never been very bright for Assamese writers. Assamese writers can take to writing only as a hobby, not embrace it as a profession. Novels sell the most, but it takes a long time to sell a few thousand copies of a novel—sometimes 5–6 years. Assamese books are also quite cheap, which means that the royalty for writers is on a beggarly scale. The Assamese do not really have a penchant for reading. Recently there has been an explosion in newspaper and magazine

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publication in Assam, which means that the few readers are diverted to these instead of substantial creative works.

PG: What do you think the present generation of writers is achieving and how are their writings different from those of an earlier generation? What are the new trends in Assamese writing? Who are the outstanding young writers today?

NB: One doesn't see too many bright new stars on the literary firmament. Of course, there are some very talented young people, but it's the older writers who are still more acceptable to the reading public. The newer writers must display a greater earnestness and diligence. Many of the newer writers are busy experimenting with form; they display a dalliance with aspects of post-modernism such as 'magic realism.' Outstanding among the newer writers are Debabrata Das, Phanindra Deb Chaudhuri, Jyotish Sikder, Nabanita Gogoi and Mausumi Kandali among fiction writers, and Samir Tanti, Sananta Tanti, Jiban Narah, Ishmael Hussain, Anupama Basumatary, and Bipuljyoti Saikia among poets.

PG: Is there a reflection of the crisis and violence in Assam in its literature or is a length of time needed before a perspective is achieved and it can be portrayed with and dealt with? Is the work prolific or scanty like literature from Partition that is now gaining in importance 50 years later?

NB: Some writers have tried to grapple with the crisis and violence in Assam, but there has been no truly memorable effort. None of them approach a work such as *Peshawar Express* written about the Partition. Thus these works will leave no real imprint on the pages of literary history, although they may have a certain documentary worth.

PG: Who are your favourite writers in Assam and in other Indian writing?

NB: I have several favourites among Assamese authors. To name a few: Saurabh Kumar Chaliha, Bhaben Saikia, Naba Kanta Barua, Atulananda Goswami, Hiren Bhattacharya, etc. Among the pre-war writers one has to name Jyoti Prasad Agarwala, Ambikagiri Roychaudhuri, Bishnu Rabha, Laxmi Nath Bezboruah and Birinchi Barua. I like Rabindra Nath Tagore and Prem Chand among other Indian writers.

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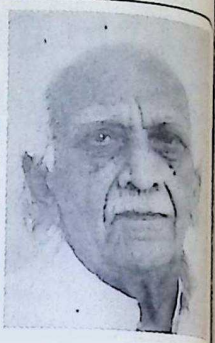

The Saraswati Samman, instituted by the K.K. Birla Foundation a few years ago, is recognized as the most prestigious and the highest literary honour in the country. It is given every year to an outstanding literary work written in any Indian language. *Kurukshetra* (Gujarati) a novel by Shri Manubhai Rajaram Pancholi 'Darshak' has been awarded the Saraswati Samman for 1997.

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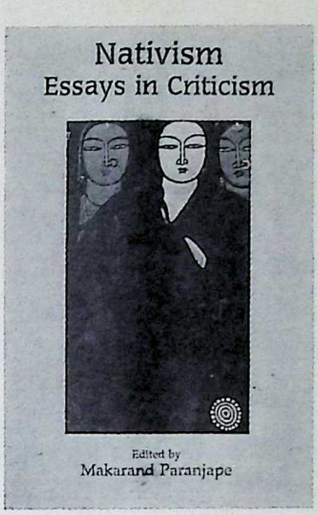
Nativism:
Emerging Consciousness

Sanjoy Dutta-Roy

NATIVISM: ESSAYS IN CRITICISM
Edited by Makarand Paranjape
Sahitya Akademi, 1997, pp. 270, Rs. 100.00



Today, there is a lot of talk going on in academic circles about post-colonialism and decolonisation. The seminar on "Nativism" or "Desivad" (Sponsored by the Sahitya Academy and the Centre for Creative Writing and Publication, IIT Kanpur), out of which this book has emerged, is actually a part of that larger discussion. The focus is sharper here in the sense that the agenda is understanding India and its multicultural, multilingual ethos and literature in its own terms. The problem, as I understand it from the book, seems to arrange itself at three levels: (1) There is the question of decolonization of our literary studies, of freeing our mind from the artificial hierarchy that dominates our educational system and its influence. The spectre of the British, and now the Euro-American ghost, dominates the scenario at various levels in the urban and educational centres in India. English studies and the importance of the English language and its smart baggage of accessories is perhaps the most apparent cause and case-study. The artificial hierarchy might be detrimental to our confidence, but the opening up of our cultures with their exposure to the West has also had its salutary effect. The essential debate centres around these two aspects—the positive and the negative. (2) There is the problem of trying to discover some basis for understanding the unifying principle in terms of a national character or identity that could be free of both the urban English modern elitism or the Brahmanical Sanskrit Classical elitism. Whether such a principle exists, or whether it would simply be a fictional creation (for political, cultural or religious purposes) becomes a subject of discussion. (3) There is the stark uncharted reality of the multilingual, multicultural India. Illiteracy here has in a unique way, been the preserver of the rich linguistic, literary and cultural traditions of the past. U.R. Ananthmurthy has been quoted by Sudhir Kumar in his essay in this book; "Many of our regional languages, despite their rich literary traditions, were actually preserved by illiteracy; for the literate of our country have always acquired the language of the ruling elites; whether it was Sanskrit, Persian or English". When the question of the recovery of these texts (lost and yet existing in popular memory in the oral, unwritten or unclassified traditions) comes, we are confronted by the fact of their relevance in the modern world. Before moving into an analysis of the essays in this book, I would like to record a few observations about the book.

Of the sixteen essays included in this book, eight are by teachers of English in various institutes, departments and Universities in India, including the editor's essay. I belong to the same category and can fully empathize with the soul-searching that our professional situation induces. After all, none of us created this system of education, nor did we frame the original models of the syllabi. We are by-products of historical forces (colonial in this case) and might feel at times that fifty years of independence from British rule is just the right time to look back, think and recover our memory of things that connect much further back in time and space (After Devy's diagnosis of Amnesia). I fully agree with Rajeev Seth (though professionally he does not belong to this category) when he says: "the crises of being alienated from history and culture affects the anglicised/Westernised elites more". With Debjani Ganguli, I too would like to applaud "the spurt of introspective sojourns undertaken by a few English Literature teachers, in order to relate their hitherto hidebound, insular discipline to the multilingual, multicultural ethos they inhabit". Rather than unquestioningly saluting the canons introduced by the British and still being subtly imported from Europe and America, seething pent-up feelings and ideas are surfacing in well-defined forms. The editor proclaims in his introduction: "Nativism, a line of thinking, is being given a voice and shape, however feeble and blurred".

The eight other essays are from writers and critics within the multilingual, multicultural ethos that Ganguli talks of. None of these eight are involved with the English language and its literary studies. Here the concern is not so much with the colonial impact or with decolonisation. Srimannarayana Murti's essay, for example, is not in the least concerned with the West and its influence on our literary studies. He is concentrating more on trying to understand the words "marga" and "desi" and the relationship between Sanskrit, Prakrit and Apabhramsas. His essay reveals how we can stay well within our own traditions of languages and literatures and indulge unself-consciously in a discourse that has contemporary relevance. Similarly Prasanna's attack on Desi Theatre is steeped in a discussion of theatre experiments born in the Indian soil, with only passing and cursory reference to theatre in the West, China and Japan. There is no reference to British theatre. Interestingly, the essay by Wagish Shukla, a mathematician, refers to a vast cross-cultural fertilization without "negative feelings". Mind and culture here appear essentially migratory, needing the native land only for "burial". These essays do not depend on the binary oppositions (East-West, Orient-Occident, India-England, Colonies-Imperial powers) that dominate most post-colonial discourses. And lying beyond both these categories are the vast uneducated rural masses who enter these discourses but cannot participate in them using their own voices.

The book gives a lot of importance to Devy and Nemade. Devy's *After Amnesia* is considered the base book in many of the discussions. Nemade's well known essay in Marathi is appended in its first English translation. Such an exercise might be good for critical focus but the debate has been in existence long before Devy or Nemade. The book and the Seminar should have been placed within the framework of the larger areas of discussion all over the world. In fact the editor has apologetically done so when he writes: "Nativism, far from being a totally unique or distinct cultural trend, is very much a part of the ongoing intellectual movements and debates of our times" (modernism, nationalism, post modernism—the so called cultural historical grand narratives). He knows, even as he says this, that this will be resented by Nemade "as another attempt to appropriate and subvert a nativistic project". Moreover, I think that the book's concern goes further back to the question of identity and selfhood in the individual, communal, national, international and universal sense. The problem of rootedness, tradition, modernity, exile, migrancy, conquest and influence, as many of the essays here have recognized are as old as time. It is an autobiographical concern and act where the memory goes back in time and space from the contemporary scenario to recover the past and come back to the present. Only Debjani Ganguli has mentioned Autobiography and Devy's text.

The book is divided into four sections with essays a) introducing the scope and span of the subject, b) giving the background of the discourse, c) charting the debates on various issues, d) revealing ways of practical application of the lines of thinking that emerge. This is a neat division but it entails and promises a far more detailed study than what is ultimately achieved.

In the introductory section Indranath Choudhury talks of grand forces in a state of conflict and tension: a) Past and Present b) Tradition and Modernity c) East and West. He brings in the Indian context through the concept of "Kula" (heredity, inheritance and tradition) and "Shila" (the making of man conditioned by "Kula" and the existing environment). His is a liberal picture. He thinks of modernity in terms of the presence of traditional values as well as openness to new innovations. He gives the interesting example of the presence of Lord Ganesh in a modern Indian hospital foyer. Instead of the tendency of comparing every Indian literary text with some Euro-American product he advocates the introduction of *our* response to the West on *our* terms and thus gain cultural confidence. He points out

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K. Satchchidanandan in his essay, seems to be more concerned with "the threat from the market forces to serious Literature". This threat, which is in the form of "invasion of values" is fast swamping the Indian way of life and thinking. It is surely harmful to our confidence and can destroy or commercialize whatever beauty there exists in our culture and literature. It is indeed cause for concern at every level, cutting across regional and cultural boundaries within India. He hopes that a pan-Indian sensibility, born out of this concern, can unite sensitive writers.

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the double-edged equality of the term "Desi" where "Desi Sharab" is considered inferior to its western counterpart whereas "Desi Ghee" is considered better and more wholesome than its technologically prepared counterpart. Such an introduction places "nativism" or its opposite as attitudes of mind that permeate every sphere of life in modern India. Literary texts and the distribution and consumption of knowledge are peripheral to this central concern. They follow like corollaries. Devy's Keynote address, in contrast, though he does talk of the vaster cultural parameters, focusses on the problem of the literary critic working in the contemporary Indian intellectual climate. His model does seem to be a product of an anglicised educational system when he uses the metaphor of Karnad's *Hayavadana*: "Where these blood cells in this body of mine standing before you are made out of the Indian soil, air and water, the stock of knowledge stored in the brain seems to have come from elsewhere". One cannot wish away colonial history. But surely, he feels, one can resist the artificial hierarchy of knowledge imposed on us. Our education and our historiography should be devoted to the recovery of our lost cultural memory. We must introspect and see within ourselves as Krishna advised Arjuna on the battlefield. We must not forget that by "We" and "Our" Devy does not mean the rustic Indian. He means the urban, educated Indian, influenced by the western models. His use of the terms "naive" and "picaro" is interesting. "Native", he tells us, goes back to "naive"—meaning people who are landlocked, bound to their village and soil. They do not travel much and produce something of practical use to their community. In contrast are the "picaros" who are widely travelled men of the world. They were morally flexible and their knowledge is not derived from their understanding of the soil of their village, but is derived from their knowledge of human nature. It was only natural that during colonial expansion the "picaros" became Europe's cultural models. Rather than use these two categories to interpret history, it might be more fruitful if we applied it to the contemporary scenario (literary or otherwise) in India. We have the globe trotters and we have the landlocked and interesting literary works born right here in India today out of the blending of the two sensibilities.

K. Satchchidanandan in his essay, seems to be more concerned with "the threat from the market forces to serious Literature". This threat, which is in the form of "invasion of values" is fast swamping the Indian way of life and thinking. It is surely harmful to our confidence and can destroy or commercialize whatever beauty there exists in our culture and literature. It is indeed cause for concern at every level, cutting across regional and cultural boundaries within India. He hopes that a pan-Indian sensibility, born out of this concern, can unite sensitive writers. He gives examples in Indian history where similar pan-Indian phenomena occured: "the Bhakti poets rejected priesthood, turned from Sanskrit to the people's tongues. The movement brought together peoples, religions, languages and literatures laying a solid multilingual foundation for Indian Literature. The unity was further strengthened by the anti-colonial and reform oriented literary movements... the Bhakti movement was basically a subaltern pan-Indian phenomenon". The "intertextuality within culture", the "heteroglossia", the "cultural plurality" realized at a more realistic conceptual level is the future project of which the nativist deconstruction of the existing concepts shall be a part. The only problem that I have with this theory is to conceive it as a project for the future. Again, we are making it an academic exercise. The Bhakti movement, I am sure, was never conceived as a project but evolved out of the necessity that cut across regional and religious boundaries.

The second section deals with the background of nativistic consciousness. Three different ways of looking at this background are explored. Patankar concentrates on the historical background of the Indo-British encounter, traces the rise of the middle-class in Bengal, the acquaintance with British systems (business contracts/law), areas of knowledge (natural and human sciences), methodology (rational prose), literature. The point that he makes about "assimilation" and "subjection" is of course nothing unique. We know that to be culturally suppressed without comparison or competition is bad and selective assimilation from another culture is good. Even his formula for having a native criterion for evaluating native traditions sounds good and so does his formula for having a universal criterion for the multinational. But somehow I cannot see these formulae and equations in as simple a manner as he does. There has been so much of blending and cross-cultural fertilization over this same period of history that he has covered that I am left quite confused. But his historical survey is praiseworthy. In fact Wagish Shukla's essay coming just after it does away entirely with the compartmentalising (even for conveniences sake) of the native and the other. The very conceptualizing of a pure native source unsullied by other cultural influences is seen as ridiculous. It never existed anywhere in the world, nor did it ever exist in India. Maybe Shukla has a point here. But the point could be read inversely too. We have to return to replenish the native consciousness, vitalize our soil, after all our journeys. Otherwise we are lost.

In direct contrast to both the essays discussed in Srimannarayana Murti's essay. The multinational or global consciousness does not even enter into the discussion, neither does the Indo-British or East West encounter. He goes into the linguistic roots of the terms "marga" and "desi" to dwell well within the cultural boundary of India. He comes out with certain observations which could have a lot of significance to-day. "Marga" in its root form has connotations of "to chase" (a wild forest animal), "to cleanse", "to purify". The path of the hunter is "marga". Marga by its derivation presupposes for its motif the existence of something wild, savage, fierce, passionate, growing in a state of nature, uncivilized, uncultivated. This has to be domesticated, cultivated, civilized, tamed, controlled. Thus the relationship between "marga" and "desi" is established. The emergence of the "marga" from the "desi" is a natural process by contraction and convergence of ideas, so as to yield uniformity and universal acceptability, assimilation and system in communication as well as in society (even the concept of a nation). But interestingly, systematization and codes of rules produce monotony. It leads to divergence, expansion into the "Desi" for vitality and fresh life. Such cyclicity has been conceived differently in different cultures. I am reminded of Blake's "negation" (close to the civilizing contraction here) and "contraries" (the wild expansive consciousness), the Appollonian and the Dionysiac, Bakhtin's Carnivalistic multiplicity of voices and the singular narrative voice. Murti has given the example of the influence of the Sanskrit pundits on the use of language. Grammarians like Patanjali and Bhratrihari took exception to the recognizing of the full value of the Prakrits and Apabhramsas, which are branded as corrupt forms. These languages could be used for social communication. But for the higher religious activities the "marga" Sanskrit was right. Bharata, interestingly, recognizes Prakrit in all its dialects as accepted language in drama. After all drama as a form is based on multiplicity of voices and thus has to be close to the people. Murti's essay convinces me that when a contemporary mind applies itself to the understanding of our linguistic and cultural roots, what can be discovered in our native sources are bound to have relevance in the modern or post modern times. After all human thinking everywhere has been on shared concerns, and evolution essentially has common origins and patterns.

The third Section—"Debates"—tries to pit varying viewpoints against each other. But the structuring is not clear enough. I have tried to read a structure that might or might not exist in the editor's plan.

Gurbhagat Singh's essay argues against the "uninationalist paradigm of Gandhi, Nehru, Kabir" that followed the enlightenment circumscribed nationalist framework. He feels that such paradigms were good as liberationist tactic, but were imaginary rather than real. They have "played their historic and contributory role". To extend them further would be to block the growth and interpretation of India. He calls this paradigm "the great betrayal of polyphony". He advocates the pushing for a confederate political set-up which would recognize the dialogic presence

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of various voices in the Bhasha literatures that do not adopt the Western or Indian mainstream models. His essay has both political and literary implications when it puts its voice against the counter-confederative totalitarian nationalist framework and its literary manifestations. Sudhir Kumar's essay says the same thing differently. He shows that the term "rashtra" focusses more on the political nation than on the people or "jana". The Sanskrit term "rashtra" appears to be more hegemonic as it expressly valorizes the rule or governance over "the people or jana". The motive behind his argument is to provoke a retrieval of the original meaning of nation or "rashtra" as the people or "jana" in order to oppose or subvert any authoritarian structure imposed on our democracy. Both the essays speak theoretically for the people, the jana, in India's case, the voices of its illiterate majority. Sudhir Kumar realizes the tragedy of our western education that has alienated "us" utterly from the peasant—the seventy percent illiterate Indian mass. So does Rajee Seth when she talks of two separate levels—the level of the circles of academic (she means the anglicised western elites more here) and the "common people". .

Prasanna short-circuits these theoretical concerns when he speaks as a practitioner in theatre and reveals the hidden realities of an overdose of Desivad in theatre (where the biggest attempts at introducing Desivad had really happened). Singh's idealization of "polyphony", Kumar's "jana" or Seth's "common people" could create chaos and problems in contemporary or modern theatre. Prasanna says that he is a contemporary person and he need not use the masks of Kathakali or the headgear or the Chhende of Yakshagana. All he needs is the narrative—and that is really rich—even from the contemporary point of view: "The narrative as we find it in Indian tradition is so fabulous that it would probably take me five generations to understand it". As for the rest, it is better and more wholesome for the contemporary person to challenge and fight tradition and thus comprehend it. He gives the example of what Tagore did in his dance-dramas, what Vallathol did in Kathakali and what Shivaram Karanth did to Yakshagana. By fighting tradition one can make it richer.

The two other essays in this section—Debajani Ganguli's and Makarand Paranjape's (who is also the editor of this volume)—are critiques of Devy's text (*After Amnesia*). They bring out some interesting angles that have not been properly explored in any of the other essays in the volume. For example Ganguli criticizes Devy for his self and the other, his East-West reductionism. It makes Devy overlook i) the effects of the Islamic invasions, ii) the more complex interface of gender, class, caste and religion within the native culture itself: "Amnesia is brought on not merely by the colonial rule, but by the systematic repression by the patriarchal set up within the native culture itself". Paranjape, both in his introduction and his essay, becomes the lone voice defending the use of the English language for literary expression in India, giving it a respectability in native culture that is equal to any of the regional languages. He is very right when he says: "A native writer may actually be indulging in non native cultural practices, while a so-called non-native writer in English actually aiding and strengthening native traditions". Is not this book itself in its use of English a good example of the second case? Against Devy's and Nemade's rejection of Indian English Literature he advocates a more open view of nativism that is able to gracefully accept the English language within its folds. However, he admits that no pidgin or Creole English has emerged in which the common people in India can express themselves, I would like to state here that varied local versions have recognizably emerged. These versions have, over these many years, been slowly finding effective expression in drama, fiction and poetry.

I find the final section—"Practice"—quite inadequate. The span of the Introduction, Background and Debate is interdisciplinary. The three essays by Anand Patil, Ajit Thakor and Jaidev are a very thin representation of the kind of practice that could emerge from such a discourse. They are good examples of literary criticism born in our soil—but is that all? All of them are on fiction. There is nothing on poetry or drama. I feel that this section should have included essays that look deep into our education system (it its various stages), essays which were examples of the writing of Subaltern history, essays discussing our indigenous thinking on politics and economics, to give just a few examples.

Despite these shortcomings, the book is a praiseworthy effort to give momentum to a dialogue and a discourse that should go a long way. The book is open ended. It is part of an ongoing process of thinking that has the multifaceted and multilingual India at its very centre.

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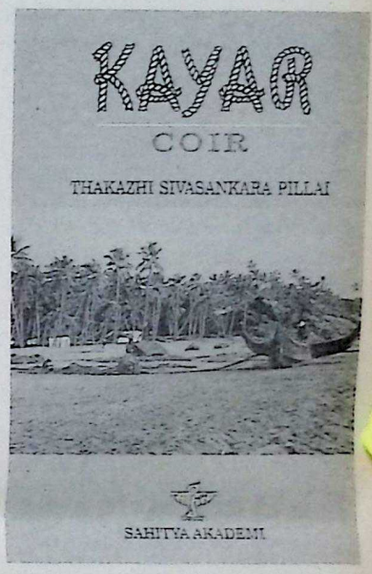
A Quest for Land in History

P. Krishnanunni

COIR (*KAYAR*)

By Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai.
Translated from the Malayalam by N. Sreekantan Nair

Sahitya Akademi, 1997, pp. 736, Rs. 275.00



"Any one who steps into this river will not get out of it completely wet and drenched with mud", says an old adage about Kerala history. But, this adage does not fit with Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai, the *Karanavar* (Head of the family) of Malayalam literature. Thakazhi's *Coir* (Kayar), perhaps, is the only historical novel in Malayalam which portrays graphically the end of different eras and the beginning of modern societies, which in turn, mark what Malayalis call *Nava Kerala* (Modern Kerala). In his macabre project of depicting Kerala history, Thakazhi's imagination goes back to the situation of Kerala in the mid-nineteenth century. The author is least bothered about the historical documents available at that time, and makes use of his imagination run superior to the documents. A fiction, thus constructed, raises certain questions: What is the relation of history with truth? Can history written from pure imagination counter all edicts and documents? Can such a history serve as a tool for posterity, and how far does the historian/narrator function as a source of authenticity?

Thakazhi begins his novel by describing the gradual change seeping into the feudal Brahminical class of Kerala in the nineteenth century. The Nair community, which had always thrived under the tutelage of Namboodiris, gets a chance to acquire some portion of land, which later helps them to question several norms associated with the feudal matriarchal set up of both these communities. As the sambandhams (marriages) between the Namboodiris and Nairs were regarded as a permissible social custom, the author implies that this social cohesion played a major role in the disintegration of the hegemonic Nair class. The Classifiers, the King's appointed people to measure the land and to decide what has to be done on them, were capable of establishing well-knit connections and engaging in sexual trafficking wherever they went. With the depiction of Kochu Pillai, the Classifier, Thakazhi describes the degenerated morals of the Nair community. The disintegration of the Brahmins is marked by their excessive greed and extravagance in administration. By giving the example of a Brahmin called Sesnayyan, who was forced to marry Kochupennu Kunjamma, the author sacrastically portrays the Brahmin class. Both Sesnayyan and Kunjamma are not chaste, and the latter has an affair with the Classifier, Seshayyan's counterpart from the Nair Community. The quest for land, therefore, is a metaphor of sexual promiscuity in Thakazhi, and all classes of people in the social hierarchy are subjected to it. It is into such a society the author introduces the Christians and Muslims.

The novel is shut to the beginnings of Christianity in Kerala. Outha, the first Christian we come across in the text, is an upset man because he cannot enter the temple compounds of Hindus. The Paruthikattil Christians of which Outha is a member, supply various oils required by the people of that area. This strange relationship of a Christian family associated with the Namboodiri *madhoms* and Nair *tharavads* is a re-writing of the history of Christianity in Kerala. The popular belief that Christians were detested by Namboodiris and Nairs is negated by the author. On the other hand, the laziness of Nairs

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and Namboodiris, the author ironically suggests, gave rise to the Christian community. The author's praise of the Christians for their remarkable business skills and shrewd tactics, to a great extent, is deserved and is not previously recorded in any official history of Kerala.

One would sometimes wonder whether the author has seriously examined the history of untouchables (Parayas and Pulayas) in Kerala in the last century. The abrupt twists and turns the author creates can be questioned. A lot of Parayas and Pulayas who were given only half a day's wages as a gift after their hard labour in the paddy fields from the Nair families, the author suggests, turned to Christianity when the Christian Missionary Society (CMS) started converting the coastal people. The tensions which prevailed among the untouchables and the other members of Hindu society at the time of the conversion are not seriously analyzed by the author. His assumption that Christianity offered the untouchables in Kerala an Edenic paradise is not entirely true, while a good number of untouchables found it difficult to break away from their Brahmin masters. For them, the Gospel remained as something unidentifiable, yet can be wished for. Further, we read about a Pulaya boy called Vattathan changing his religion and becoming a Muslim. Before Tipu's invasion, it is hard to believe that such conversions into Islam took place in Kerala. This deliberate play of the novelist with his imagination perplexes several historical view points. It should be noted that Thakazhi's narrative never changes a bit from its unilinear stream of flow. Later, when the author describes Tipu's invasion, he provides a detailed description of how several Namboodiris were converted into Islam. Thus, a conglomeration of different races has sowed the first seeds of modernity on the soil of Kerala.

The transition of Kerala societies from tradition to modernity is marked by a series of ups and downs. The early twentieth century Kerala witnessed a lot of clashes between tradition and modernity. By giving the example of Kesavan Pillai of Seelanthipillil, Thakazhi describes how the backlash of tradition acted upon those people who wanted a change in their society. The school run by Kesavan Pillai for the untouchables was burned to ashes by the conservative Hindu community. Further, the author portrays in detail the social reform movements initiated by Sri Narayana Guru and Chattambi Swamikal and shows how these movements coloured the perception of Keralites about the national uprisings against the British Raj. Much of man's potentialities are called into question when he/she confronts the national issue. By relating various social movements of Kerala to several other political uprisings all over the country, Thakazhi succeeds in showing that the history of any place can never be condensed. The individual traumas are juxtaposed with a society's concerns, and the attitudes of several revolutionaries, traitors, conservatives and pseudomodernists are well brought out.

The thought-provoking section of the novel is the final part in which the novelist returns to the question of land and gives it a new political dimension. Surendran, the freedom fighter and the most derided Communist leader, is a classic example of Thakazhi's question: Is there an end to human desire? Like the Classifier, this character also indulges in immoral sexual trafficking. Later, when the Naxalites brand him as their class enemy, the author gently touches upon the rise of the early Naxalite movement in Kerala without getting into the core of the matter.

Man's struggle for land and freedom is an everlasting one. Since the land reforms of Kerala has only served to enrich the capitalist class, the clash between the haves and have nots will not end ever. The question of land and man's unending desire for it, as the novelist depicts them, invites a comparison with some novels of the historical genre written by Latin American writers like Jorge Amado and Miguel Angel Austurias. But unlike these Latin American authors, Thakazhi's narrative transcends the limits of history. In its vast scope, *Coir* challenges all the notions of Lyotardian 'meta-narratives' of constructing a postmodern text. The different mythical tales, rituals and festivals interwoven in his narrative, in their entirety, constructs a realistic text. One can question Thakazhi's imagination, but not the problems he raises.

The late Shri N. Sreekantan Nair's English translation, sad to say, suffers from a lot of pitfalls. A text deeply rooted in a culture can only be trans-*created*, not translated. Nair, in his hasty translation has retained a number of vernacular terms, which he has forgotten to give in the glossary. At some places, Nair has condensed some incidents into a single sentence. Several pages require good proof reading and worst of all, some typographical errors are unpardonable. In his Herculean task, had Nair ever thought of the readers (especially, non-Keralites) reading his translation?

P. Krishnanunni is Lecturer in English in Aurobindo College (Evening), New Delhi.

Doleful, Dolorous, Malodorous

Keki N. Daruwalla

SET MY HEART IN ASPIC

By Nisha da Cunha

Harper Collins India, 1997, pp. 186, Rs. 145.00

Halfway through Nisha da Cunha's second short story book I thought of Keats's *Ode to Melancholy*, and looked up the poem after forty years or so. No, I did not find an emotional equivalent in the poem for the kind of pensive sadness that pervades her book. And the poem was all about Lethe and wolf's bane and nightshade and Proserpine and one couldn't relate to it anymore. (It is not just language that gets dated. The images, myths, concerns which the language voiced once also become dated. Today we would react to cyanide, not nightshade. And our Proserpines would be the likes of the venerable Mayawati or that other well built lady from the south—both Hitler and Eva Braun in one.) Keats's melancoly "dwells with Beauty—Beauty that must die/ and joy whose hand is ever at his lips". No such aesthetic binds Ms. da Cunha's stories.

Moreover the melancholy of Keats is transient and sudden:

> *But when the melancholy fit shall fall*
> *Sudden from heaven like a weeping cloud. .*

Nisha de Cunha is herself the weeping cloud. To carry this tiresome analogy a little further, I must say that the Ode did not ring true. (Keats wrote better than a dozen good poems in his short lifetime). Quite a few of Nisha's stories sound authentic.

There is a rhythm and a flow about Nisha da Cunha's writing. Through mood, texture and narrative her personal stamp gets embossed upon the story almost imperceptibly. A sharp reader would easily be able to spot a story by her, even if it went under an anonymous byline. The writing is crystal clear and smooth like a mountain stream flowing over rounded pebbles.

Even though most of the stories are in the third person, the author identifies closely with the characters. Normally that is easier done in first person narratives. She conjures up a sort of an ecology of the spirit and the reader finds herself/himself in a hothouse of feeling. Though the stories are tragic—if that's the word—the atmosphere is not heavy with foreboding. These are not, after all, stories fashioned after the gothic novel. The melancholy is matter-

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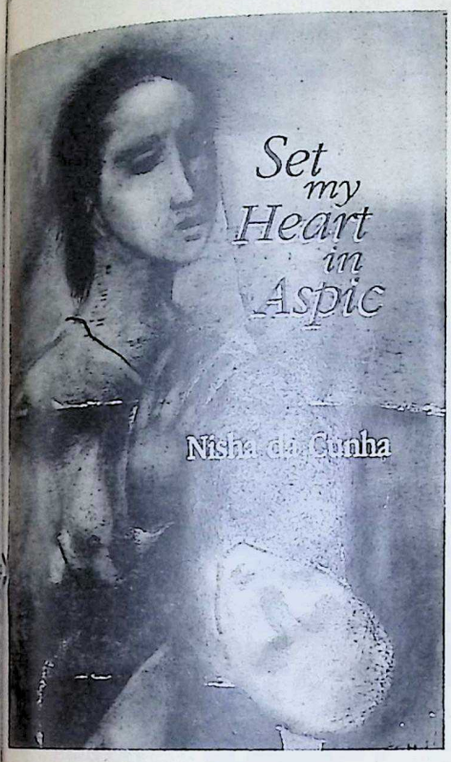

she returns to Aunt Meg to have Kim's baby in the house he had grown up in. But this skeleton of a plot does no justice to the story, which reads like a poem.

"Set my Heart in Aspic" starts with a funeral for two. The story unfolds through a monologue of sorts regarding the events that led to the deaths. The story unfolds through these narratives. But where this cinematic technique (popularized by Khorosawa) is used something more is expected by the reader than just the unveiling of the plot. With each narrative the core of events should itself be subjected to protean changes. Otherwise where is the fun in five narratives in one story? This is not to take away from the merit of the piece. It has a flow and a fluency about it despite the funerary atmosphere. Among the sub-plots (if that's the word) is the one about two sisters loving the same rotter. "It was Mama who said 'Yes, go to your far-away place, I'll miss you very much but he's a bad one that Rui and Tessa will rue the day she married him and I am sorry he had to be your first way of finding out about loving someone. First love is the worst in terms of suffering but strangely it does stop one day and you wonder how you could have agonized so desperately over someone.' How simply and beautifully put.

The class room lurks in the wings. Every now and then a situation reminds her of some university text or other. And there is one first person account "The Girl in Burka, Riding a cycle" where two of her bright students, a Catholic and a Muslim, marry after the January riots in Bombay and move to Karjat where they live an almost ascetic life.

There are a few careless misprints, but none worse than on the last page (acknowledgements). Here Cavafy is spelled as "Canafy", Hopkins as "Gerard Marley (instead of Manley) Hopkins and Auden as "Anden" if you please. But they got Golding right. So can one really complain?

Nisha da Cunha is one of our best short story writers. But really Miss, at least once in a while, can't some *bhoola, bhakta* smile, light up your lips?

Keki N. Daruwalla is a poet and writer.

Letter from London

Stephen Moss

A book editor has to walk a tightrope: between news values and literary values; between the book as event and the book as book; between journalism and, at the risk of sounding pompous, art. Anthony Curtis, who was literary editor of the *Financial Times* in the sixties and of the *Sunday Telegraph* for two decades until 1990, recently produced a book of memoirs, called *LitEd*, in which he said the job could only be done successfully if you were equally interested in the books and journalism. Be unduly arcane and you will (rightly) irritate your colleagues; be "just" a journalist and the book becomes nothing more than a here-today-gone-tomorrow occurrence, ephemeral, forgettable.

In UK literary journalism in the past decade or so the balance has swung away from the book as artifact and towards the book as event, and it becomes increasingly hard to isolate the substance of the book from the surrounding sensationalism. Two recent examples have underlined the point—Gitta Sereny's book on the life of child murderer Mary Bell, published by Macmillan UK in May, and Hanif Kureishi's new novel *Intimacy*, published by Faber in the same month.

The Bell book, which had been cloaked in secrecy because of the subject matter, generated extraordinary comment and anger when it was revealed that Bell—who is now free and has been furnished with a new identity to protect her daughter—had been paid to cooperate with Sereny, who is famous for her great biography of the Nazi war criminal Albert Speer.

The book was serialized in the *Times*, questions were raised in the House of Commons, Bell and her daughter (who now for the first time learned of her mother's past) had to flee from packs of newshounds. The book was delivered to shops on the day of publication, which meant in effect that the whole debate about the book took place without the book having been read by anyone. It was the principle of the book that was debated, rather than the book itself.

Similarly, the Kureishi novel—a thinly veiled treatment of the acrimonious breakdown of his marriage—generated features, interviews, angry letters from his sister, endless debate, but little discussion of the book itself. Perhaps in this case it was impossible to read the book as anything other than a *roman-à-clef*; few even tried.

These examples reflect a growing trend for the book to be forgotten in the journalistic pursuit of the story. In our culturally aware age, books are likely to crop up everywhere—on news pages, feature pages, interview pages. There is a real appetite—certainly among newspaper editors, presumably among their readers—for what Gore Vidal christened "book chat". That is all to the good—books can now inform every section of a newspaper. The disadvantage is that the review—and this applies right across the arts—can be downgraded. The role of the critic is everywhere under threat—the taste now is for celebrity interviewers, solipsistic columnists, feature-led theme pieces.

When Anthony Curtis and his equally resilient contemporaries Terence Kilmartin of the *Observer* and W.L. Webb of the *Guardian* began their lengthy stints in the late fifties, the critic ruled—Kenneth Tynan and Harold Hobson in theatre, Dilys Powell and C.A. Lejeune in cinema, Cyril Connolly and Philip Toynbee, and later Anthony Burgess, in books. It would be foolish to argue for a return to a sort of tweedy critical hegemony, to a gentlemen's club of critics upholding timeless literary values, but we should be aware of the dangers of letting hype replace judgement, of swapping Connolly's 10-year test for five minutes of newsy fun. What does Sereny's book tell us about child abuse, evil, the possibilities of recovery? Is Kureishi's book effective as a novel, a memoir, a polemic? When the dust has settled, let the thinking begin.

Stephen Moss is literary editor of the Guardian.

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Sweeping Away Cobwebs

Dhananjay Kapse

THE LACKADAISICAL SWEEPER: COLLECTION OF SHORT STORIES IN ENGLISH

By Gauri Deshpande

East West Books, Madras, 1997, pp. 213, Rs. 135.00

Who or what is a "Lackadaisical Sweeper"? If you think the title of this book (or the story within) slightly strange, what then will you think of "Vervain", or "Insy Winsy Spider", titles of two other stories? Or maybe you should try this, "Hookworm, Lamprey, Tick, Fluke and Flea", which opens this volume. It certainly had me scurrying for my dictionary. But I suppose I should have been prepared. Gauri Deshpande delights in being teasingly difficult and different. Having read all her work in Marathi—eight novels, a book of short stories, a collection of anecdotal essays apart from a monumental translation of Richard Burton's *A Thousand and One Nights* as well as poetry in English. I had been looking forward to reading her long awaited collection of short stories in English. The wait has been worthwhile.

R. Raj Rao in a largely perceptive "Afterword", comments, "Gauri Deshpande's life and writings are an extension of each other, a part of an ongoing process; separate the two and you have an incomplete understanding of both." However one is disappointed not to find any elaboration of this by Rao, perhaps due to lack of adequate knowledge about the details of her life. But I can't help reading these stories biographically. Some background information may be in order.

Daughter of Principal G.D. Karve and Professor Iravati Karve, the famous anthropologist, essayist, and author of *Yuganta*, the celebrated study of the *Mahabharata*, Gauri Deshpande has erudition and independent thinking flowing in her veins from birth. Her maternal grandmother (Aai) lived in Burma at the beginning of the century when few women were exposed to outside influences, and her paternal grandmother (baya) a remarried child-widow, lived a fulfilling if at times turbulent married life with Maharshi Dhondo Keshav Karve, the pioneer of women's emancipation in Maharashtra. Gauri Deshpande's uncle Raghunath Dhondo Karve started the movement about family planning and education about sexuality in India in the face of virulent opposition and helping him was her aunt the essayist Shakuntala Paranjpe, daughter of 'Rangler' Paranjpe and mother of the renowned film-maker Sai Paranjpe. You can't ask for a more illustrious family.

The reader's appreciation of the story "Rose Jam" is immensely enriched by a knowledge of these facts. It is in fact a fictional reworking of the essays she has written about her family. But even if one doesn't know these details, the story still works on its own. Any perceptive reader will figure out the numerous swipes at the—by now—clichéd and stereotyped magic and exoticism of Indo-Anglian writing, that the story takes *en passant*. Her recent caustic comments about *The God of Small Things* and *The Moor's Last Sigh* take issue with such books catering to and feeding into the West's image of India. In "Rose Jam" as the narrator points out again and again, her family was "unusual enough in that place at that time" but hardly magical or interestingly oriental. "They may have taken the small steps that led India into the modern age, but that is because they did not know that no one else in the world wanted India to be anything but a quaint outpost of the Raj."

Like the narrator of "Rose Jam", Gauri Deshpande in her writing has always resisted being labelled, or categorized, or being forced to put on a disguise. From the beginning she has prized her unfettered imagination, refusing to write in a way that is expected of her as a woman or as an Indian. That's why she writes a story like "Vervain" set entirely in the West and peopled by western characters. The narrator, curiously nicknamed Li-Ta (Li for Elizabeth, Ta for Carlotta), grows up in World War Two Germany, in hardship, deprivation, flight and fight for survival. Her mother dies early and at the age of ten she becomes "mother, companion, chatelaine, cook-housekeeper, confidante and advisor to three men"—her father and two brothers. In marriage, in her late thirtees, to a sailor twelve years older than her, she finds some stability and happiness in Luxemburg, away from memories of the War. With two children, unteutonically named Paul and Mark, she is everything to three men again. But her happiness or "false consciousness" as a feminist might say, is shattered when she discovers her husband's infidelity. If Gauri Deshpande's stories were tracts as R. Raj Rao opines, because "her narrators seem too cocksure (sic) of their opinions" then this story would have ended with Li-Ta finding a feminist freedom—as offered by her visitor D.T. But what in fact happens is that she can't fight her way out and is sucked back into her fifty-year long comforting—and deadening—routine of caring for her "men".

If Gauri Deshpande writes against the repressive traditions of patriarchy, she also uncompromisingly depicts the internalization of these norms by women themselves, in stories like "Hookworm, Lamprey, Tick, Fluke and Flea"—which incidentally are names of various fish used as baits and thus symbolically stand for the five women friends who find themselves being 'Stupid Samaritans', compelled to help their friend Jenny who as it turns out, does not want a job, nor Liberation but only being an "unpaid slave to her boys, those worthless penniless drunkards and wastrels." In "Insy Winsy Spider" she shows a feminist, achieving mother being stumped by her own daughter who, though brought up politically correctly—or perhaps because of that—refuses college education and wants to get married and set up house at the age of eighteen. Instead of analyzing how a child grasps the difference between itself and its mother, the story asks, "when does a mother begin to differentiate between herself and her baby?... What are 'we', when we are 'we'?" It is not a one track feminist agenda that dominates Gauri Deshpande's writings, but a near obsessive search for freedom, not just freedom from external restrictions but also freedom from oneself whenever there is the slightest danger of that 'self' ossifying.

And her quirky imagination and sharp sense of humour enable her to portray her characters from within, ferretting out their inconsistencies and self-contradictions but always in an involved, sympathetic manner, as in the stories "Morgan in Disguise" and "A Harmless Girl".

Interaction between different cultures has always been a major theme of Gauri Deshpande's work in Marathi. Almost all her novels feature Indi... Maharashtrian-heroines who for a s... live abroad, not in familiar U.K. U.S.A. but in unfamiliar Japan ... Greece, reflecting the globe-trott... peripatetic life of the author herse... the Tokyo setting is used as a m... backdrop in "Whatever Happened ... (clearly the least satisfying story in ... volume), it assumes enormous imp... tance in "Smile and Smile and... when the smug Indian narrator-woman—is brought up short aga... the reality that her Japanese subordin... Mayuri, whom she has been trying ... force into her mould, is irreconcila... different from her, as a *hibakusha*, a ch... of the Bomb.

In both "Brand New Pink Nike ... and "Dmitri in the Afternoon" t... middle aged Indian protagonists a... transformed by a causal *non-sexual* e... counter with foreign men (Americ... and Greek) and their jaded marria... get a new lease of life, a theme ve... common in her Marathi works. It's n... just the foreignness of these men wh... is attractive (though one wonders w... they are invariably tall, large and whi... skinned) but they seem to represent ... different, fresher way of looking at l... There are no gushing emotions ... purple prose here *a la* Mills and Bo... romances—in any case these are tra... sient, fleeting encounters—but th... seem to enable the protagonists to pe... ceive themselves in a different way, ... break out of a habituated prison ... society's—and their own—making.

Which leads us nicely into the ar... romantic story "Habits", where t... narrator is "thoroughly alarmed at t... prospect of forming a habit. Any hab... and has become a "rather peculiar an... unreliable sort of person." And whe... her new office colleague determine... that someone must look after her an... her children, to give her an 'identity'... sense of pride in herself, and when sh... learns with horror that he lives the mo... regular, time-bound, routine lif... imaginable, her first action is to ru... away from him to continue her mess... shabby but 'independent' life.

With all the different cultural inte... actions, an inter-racial marriage had ... figure in this book, and in "Hell... Stranger" and "The Debt" we have tw... very different, but equally sensitiv... treatments of this theme. The India... protagonist of "Hello Stranger", mar... ried to an American and "grafted ont... her culture after he was all grown-up ... has left most of his past behind, s... much so, that when memories com... flooding back when he is awaiting the ... birth of his child, it makes him acutely ... uncomfortable. And when he holds the ... new-born baby, "This was it, he knew ... This was the final irrevocable step...

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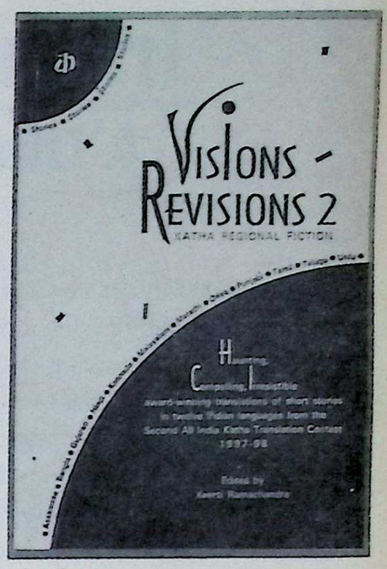
Probing the Human Condition

M. Vijayalakshmi

VISIONS REVISIONS 2: KATHA REGIONAL FICTION
Edited by Keerti Ramachandra
Katha, New Delhi, 1998, pp. 169, Rs. 150.00

The book under review, second in the Katha series and the outcome of an all-India translation workshop organized in collaboration with the British Council, contains twelve short stories by well-known writers. As a genre the short story presents a wide variety of forms in its subcontinental avatar. The short story gained prominence and reader-following mainly in the earlier decades of this century due in large measure to the growth of popular language journals. Unlike the novel the short story does not probe every aspect of the totality of life. To paraphrase a Tamil critic, K. Sivattambi, the short story probes an underlying human condition or emotion. Its characters are delineated, not 'evolved'. The truth or predicament which the characters confront in the course of their actions forms the nucleus of the short story. The short story must lead the reader to a mental or emotional state which should be created not by recourse to verbiage but without it i.e. the reader should arrive at it unawares. The length of a story does not necessarily define a short story. Operating within this philosophical framework the Indian short story tradition has employed a variety of story telling techniques including the traditional oral forms of the fable, fantasy, allegory and the parable. It will be an interesting exercise to explore as to which language draws most from which of these traditions.

Coming to the present collection the short stories present an engaging variety of themes and styles. The Assamese and Oriya stories ("Rainmaker" by Harendra Kumar Bhuyan translated by Apratim Barua and "The Other God" by Pratibha Ray translated by Monalisa Dani) concern societal aspects and are narrated like an allegory and a parable respectively. The Bengali, Gujarati and Hindi stories ("Nandita" by Bani Basu, translated by Jaya Banerji, "Congratulations by Bindu Bhatt translated by Kamal Sanyal, and "Crows" by Mrinal Pande, translated by Prasenjit Ranjan Gupta) explore failed or failing marriages. The Kannada and Malayalam stories ("A Scoundrel" by Shantinath Desai, translated by Padma C. Rao and "Sherlock" by M.T. Vasudevan Nair, translated by Sachi Madhavan) study alienated psyches, in entirely differing predicaments. The Marathi, Punjabi and Tamil stories ("Burden" by Prakash Sant, translated by Kamal Sanyal, "Pabi Maina" by Gurbaksh Singh, translated by Githa Sagar and "Our Teacher" by Sundara Ramaswamy, translated by Malati Mathur) focus on childhood and on a sense of loss but from completely differing perspectives. While the Telugu story ("The Flute Player" by K.N.Y. Patanjali, translated by K.P. Sharma) is a fantasy on fear, the Urdu story, ("The Will" by Ahmad Yusuf, translated by Nadeem Ahmad), tells the story of change in a traditional family in the manner of a *kissa*. Most of the stories are good reading and they ought to be so since Katha is meticulous about story-selection. But my personal favourite is the Gujarati story. Tautly wrought, well-compressed, full of 'mood' this is a story of the eternal triangle, of a woman in love with a married man. It is beautifully underwritten, from the point of view of the other woman whose mature age impels her to sad and inconclusive reflections about the predicament of human relationships. The story has been well-translated, as are the rest. The Bengali story is somewhat cliched and too distanced in its exploration of a failing middle-class marriage. The Tamil story meticulously written according to the grammar of the short story smacks of a deliberateness that robs one of the pleasure of reading. The Oriya and Urdu stories written in piquant and tongue-in-cheek styles make interesting reading. The Malayalam story deals with the predicament of a young man from Kerala in the Land of Plenty with no desire to strike it rich despite the concerned promptings of a sibling and surrenders himself to the admonishments delivered by his sole companion, a feline. The Marathi story which is full of local colour is about a boy living with grandparents, away from his mother, who yearns for his mother's touch.



The short story must lead the reader to a mental or emotional state which should be created not by recourse to verbiage but without it i.e. the reader should arrive at it unawares.

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Much hard work has evidently gone into the editing of the translations. Katha appears to prefer the usage of kinship terms in the languages, which doesn't present insurmountable problems to the readers—the course of the story explains the kinship and more often than not the terms relate to similar terms in other languages. But there are many other terms which do not have transparent meanings—like *Chelma* or *gur* which are not necessarily understood across the length and breadth of the country and which admit of simple English language equivalents. It is understandable when a translator is unwilling to substitute an awe-striking expression like 'Kaal baisakhi' as with 'Nor wester' but the explanatory terms that follow such expressions must be clear and bring out the intended effect. While I liked the typically Bengali 'Ish' spelled out as 'Isshhh' I was sore that 'Saappattu Raman' became 'Sapat Raman'.

Much hard work has evidently gone into the editing of the translations. Katha appears to prefer the usage of kinship terms in the languages, which doesn't present insurmountable problems to the reader.

M. Vijayalakshmi is Librarian at the Sahitya Akademi.

This was goodbye."

"The Debt" provides a counterpoint. The Indian protagonist, married to an American, is dead in an accident soon after the story begins, and in the ensuing bustle Anita is unable to terminate her pregnancy, which he was so happy about and she was not. The story follows her impulsive journey to India, to meet his old and dying father, to learn the lesson from him that everything is interconnected, nothing and no one is isolated, we all have our debts to pay.

A lesson also learnt by Seeta, in "The Lackadaisical Sweeper", who inspite of her parents' and society's conditioning that after marriage a woman's first duty is to her husband, is desperately unhappy at his betrayal of her friendship with the happy, generous and trusting Shiela, for his own pecuniary benefit. She keeps searching for that "something quite abstract, as yet obscure, but demanding nevertheless, to which she owed her duty first," and that search brings her to establish contact with the shadowy, eponymous seemingly misanthropic 'lackadaisical sweeper' of a street in Hong Kong, at the end of the story.

Exploitation and betrayal runs through most of these stories, sometimes comically sometimes tragically, and the *piece de resistance* is a story without any plot, characters, events or dialogue. It is a meditation by an unnamed first person narrator weaving the metaphysical conceit of Donne and Marvell which wittily and painstakingly compares a woman's body with a map. Ingeniously teasing out the connection between cartographical exploration and imperial exploitation, the story provides a compressed, complex, poetic evocation of colonialism and its aftermath and it is only near the end that the reader learns that the narrator-woman who is going to "draw this map all over again. Get to know myself in a way I choose, redefine myself, re-imagine myself", is India. Edward Said it was who elaborated Foucault's theory of power knowledge into a study of 'culture and imperialism'. No wonder then that this story "The Map", is "A tribute to Edward Said".

These fifteen stories, allegorical, ironic, quirky and unpredictable, playing with language and point of view, probingly subversive, sceptical yet never cynical, moral without being moralistic, "self-centric" and not necessarily "gynocentric", are a significant addition and an astringent corrective to Indian literature in English.

Dhananjay Kapse teaches English literature at Kirorimal College, University of Delhi, Delhi.

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Interface

A Dialogue

The Book Review Literary Trust and the United States Information Services jointly hosted a dialogue on the Interface between Publishing and Reviewing on 24 November 1997. "The Event", Ritu Menon who was in the Chair said, "heralded the activities of the winter session at the India International Centre."

The speakers were a mix of editors, authors, academics, reviewers and publishers. They were Ravi Dayal, Urvashi Butalia, Meenakshi Mukherjee, Indira Chandrasekhar, Geetha Dharmarajan, Rajiv Bhargava, Shobhana Bhattacharji and the guest speakers from the United States, Robert Silvers, Editor *The The New York Review of Books* and Rea Hederman publisher of Granta and *New York Review of Books*.

The discussions began with Henry Mendelsohn, Director Libraries, American Centre, introducing the American visitors.

THE FOUNDING OF THE NEW YORK REVIEW OF BOOKS

Robert Silvers began by saying that he seldom talked about their paper and recounted the story of how it was founded thirty years ago. He had worked as an editor most of his life, first in Paris where he was editor of the *Paris Review*. For him the work of an editor is essentially that of a critical admirer who dreams of bringing together writers of freshness and even geniuses, with the audience they deserve. In the early 1960s he asked one of the critics he admired most—Elizabeth Hartwick to write for him in *Harpers* on the state of book-reviewing in America and she wrote that reviewing, particularly in the dominant *New York Times* had become listless, perfunctory, mediocre and lacking in spirit. Silvers made enquires about the state of book-reviews, he was laughed at, told by people that unless he could find a millionaire who was willing to lose a lot of money, there would never be a large enough audience for serious book-reviewing. His life changed in 1963 when there was a long and bitter strike at *The New York Times*, his friend Jason Epstein, publisher of Pan-House rang him up and told him that this was the only time when he could start a book-review journal without capital, without a penny, because the publishers were going mad, they were going crazy, they were desperate, they didn't care, they were publishing books which were coming out without reviews, so any publication that could present itself as publishing reviews would immediately receive advertisements. So Jason and his wife Barbara, Elizabeth Hartwick and Robert Lowe took leave of absence, set to work to create their own paper. They asked themselves which of the writers in the English speaking world they admired the most and would like to read on the books just being published even if they had never or hardly ever written a book-review. As it happened some of the most prominent writers in America were willing to drop whatever they were doing and write reviews for no payment in a very short time as they all felt a new paper was needed and that critical consideration of books was a high and neglected cause. So, within weeks they received reviews by writers like W.H. Auden, MacCarthy, Norman Mailer and Susan Sontag and historians, economists, scientists and poets. While editing these articles Barbara Epstein and Silvers went around to publishers with their growing list of contributors and practically every publisher took an advertisement. They then found a printer and a sympathetic Bank that agreed to back the printing of the first issue of 50,000 copies which sold out. They had over a thousand letters asking them to go on and after that beginning they had very little trouble selling stock to a very small group of willing well-to-do people, while keeping control to themselves. As long as they could keep going and make a small profit, made enough to live on, they could do literally what they wanted, no owner, no foundation, no government, no one could fire them or pressure them as long as they paid the bills. Miraculously 25 years later, Rea Hederman, acquir ownership of the paper promising the same freedom they always had.

EDITORIAL CONTENT

Rea Hederman had this to say about editorial content: "I think it is a rat precious thing. But too often, it is subjugated to the whims of the busin department, which I represent, the editorial expenditure being discretion rather than necessary often because the tendency is as soon as a magazine beg to have problems financially, to go in and begin to cut the expenditure of editorial department and say we need to pay contributors less, we need to do ot things. It is an easy place to make cuts but I believe that it is the last place that budget cuts should be placed. It takes years to develop the editorial quality publication and to develop a publication to the point where it has a wi discerning audience that understands, appreciates and wants regularly to read magazine. Again, I think that is the key point, that it is much easier to kee subscriber than to go and find a new one and it is the quality that attracts read to publications. I believe this reading audience is smarter and more percept than they are given credit for. And, I further believe that this audience can ens and abandon rapidly any publication that begins to act dishonestly by reduc the quality of the editorial content for the sole reason of turning a higher profit."

Silvers had earlier opined that in publishing cultural criticism, whatever form of legal situation, defacto control by editors who conceive the aims and intellectual textures of the journal is an immeasurably precious asset, central to work itself. Some of the most interesting writers in the world had been willing collaborate with them. For one thing, they found that the *Review* was being re and talked about by the people they knew, that they are reaching an audience constellation of audiences which was characterized by willingness to consi writing that was probing and challenging a conventional language, a convention opinion and was willing to examine critically a wide variety of ideas. Ar secondly, some of these readers were made to feel that the form of the book-revie itself had opened up in the paper.

Barbara and he started from the premise that writing and the review its should not be merely competent, informative and informed, but felt that in texture, its imaginativeness the writing they published should have its own bit quality. They believed that literary sensibility could contribute perceptions th were often lacking in the prose of conventional academics and journalists, and th is why over the years had some of the novelists and poets whom they admired t most, not only to review books about literature, but to go out and observe t world, discuss central and social issues. A poet who is now the Oxford Profess of Poetry, went to Ethiopia to write about the famine there and to the Philippine he has become a regular columnist, and writes on everything from Rwanda to t history of Berlin to the marketing of the British monarchy. And, somethin comparable takes place when brilliant students of society and history are asked t consider the work of writers and poets. For example in 1997 the economi Amartya Sen wrote a long, controversial reflection for *The New York Review of Boo* (NYRB henceforth) under 'life and ideas' about Rabindra Nath Tagore, so it wa when the anthropologist Professor Gibbs, one of the great experts on Islam, wro from Lebanon.

In any case, they soon realized the extraordinary possibilities that they ha opened up by starting a book-review journal. Of the 15,000 odd books that the receive every year for reviews, there are only a small number of outstandi books. Most are highly technical or arkane on almost everything from bicycling bio-degradation. But these subjects could be of intense, intellectual interest whe considered with clarity by an original mind. Some years ago, when the fiction bes seller list seemed at its bleakest, its most sketchy, its most boring and dreary wit its gothic novels, sagas of pioneer families and super rich Texan Valley, just at thi moment Gore Vidal undertook to write on the entire list of these books and on eac and every book he analysed the different and recurrent paradigms—socia paradigm and sexual paradigm and sentimentality and suspense on which thes books depended. In much the same way a Harvard biologist wrote with gre instructiveness on historical and scientific forces and super-popular novels suc as Michael Crichton's *Jurassic Park*.

So whether it was physics, biology, history, anthropology, the books they wer considering were often locked apart from one another, kept themselves in com partments by their special language written by experts for experts or for overlap ping fields experts as in the current controversy between neurologists and philosophers with the question of consciousness or about geneticism evolution ary psychology. Silvers and Epstein saw their work as breaking down the wall between these compartments by insisting on clarity of language.

So, without any particular calculation, they found they are combining into

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larger audience, different kinds of readers from many different specialities, many different interests, all over the world, who seemed to see themselves as somewhat grudging, half-willing members of a contentious family. "In every issue of the *Review* the somewhat helter-skelter combination is represented in some form, you usually see the *Review* having to do with a work of art or music, there is a review of a book of science or economics, at least one review of a novel, a book of poetry, you see clustered together four reviews and a piece on several books sometimes as many as ten books. For example, there might be ten books on Reagan, ten books on Yugoslavia and you may find an analysis of the state, or on an entire field of enquiry, such as Freudian psycho-analysis. There are writers who present ideas of interest to the most advanced thinkers in those fields, and also cater to people in the middle or those who know nothing about the subject—perhaps most visibly of all, critical discussion of contemporary political ideas and political issues whether on the tactics of the administration or the effects of globalisation on American domestic economics."

DEBATES

Silvers said, no serious journal or book can remain aloof from deeply controversial issues. There is no safe, no apolitical place from which to publish a book review. "We published very different views on Vietnam by such experts as Fairbank, or an ardent diplomat as Gorge Kenin, . . . as well as radical critics such as Chomsky, they all were in one way or another apalled by the futility and the destruction and cruelty of the war and were apologetic. But we took no single doctrinnaire political line and as the north Vietnamese took over the south my friend called my attention to a long report published in France setting out in detail the repression of the population that he had observed in Saigon, the way books were burned, people jailed, the reporting to camps, we published it. There was an outcry from our readers who had not only come to think of the *Review* as outspoken about the war, but had come to see the north-Vietnamese as the victims. So, subscriptions were cancelled and if there is no such outcry from time to time, in publishing a paper, we feel that you probably don't have an intellectual journal worth the name."

Their general inclination had been from the first, to try to take the side of people of groups who had been suffering from state power, the people who have been bullied or harassed, censored, jailed, tortured, killed, disappeared for their opinions, affiliations and preferences. From the early 60s when the word humanright was little known, they found themselves trying to publish such views about every sort of regime, Left and Right, centrist, they published accounts of poets torture under the Shah, and of the Bahai philosopher's torture under the Ayatollahs. In both its articles and its letters corner, the *Review* has become a kind of an international billboard of appeals from and on behalf of otherwise silenced voices. They received around a thousand requests a year from people in beleagured countries and positions for some kind of a public examination about their situation.

Academic and political judgements present themselves in highly dogmatic and partisan forms. Now this has been the case with the charged debates in the U.S. over such American culture questions as deconstruction, multi-culturalism and these questions have occupied the NYRB for many years. In the early '60s when NYRB was started, there were no more than 6 per cent of all students who were black; most of them went to less than first rate colleges and some of the best excluded women altogether. During the last nearly thirty-four/five years now, there has been a growth of a college system in which more than twenty per cent were non-white and 55 per cent women, at the same time there have erupted the most bitter controversies about the curriculum and the distribution of academic power. There were intense complaints in the U.S. that the culture of Afro-Americans, the Hispanics, the concerns of women have been neglected for the writings and standards of white males have been dominant. The NYRB published many hundreds of thousands of words. Silvers thought that they involve the often concealed contest of an intellectual power that a book review and any interaction should confront.

For example, the power to have students read texts that reflect a particular ethnic experience or a political or social perspective while some of the new and previously neglected texts have strong claims to be part of the curriculum, have reflected in the desire to find topical work that would interest students brought up on television, who have very little interest in serious literature, or serious thinking. In reviewing these books or on these questions the contributors took a variety of positions, but they all insisted that what was at stake is not simply a given list of books or writings but the way those textswere taught. Contributors disagreed with writers who saw the great works of the tradition as repositories of timeless values. Fredrick Crews forcefully expressed the views that characterised the NYRB pages when he challenged what he called the transfusion model of education, a model by which the stored wisdom of the past classics is considered as a kind of plasma that would drip beneficially into one's veins. Professor Crews wrote that what was wanted was not reverence but clean debates over classics and modern texts that are in fact themselves often quite fiercely opposed to one another—not timeless values but historical consciousness and self-reflection and criticism.

The NYRB published an account of how in the State University of New York an English instructor desperately trying to interest his class in what it means to write with some intensity, compared the writer's involvement with his subject, with the excitement of sexual passion. Some young women decided that this analogy was offensive to them and they lodged a harassment complaint against him. He was told he could avoid a formal hearing before a big group of students and teachers if he signed a confession and was willing to submit to therapy and when he refused was found guilty in a hearing before a board appointed by the women administrators who had encouraged these young women to make the complaints. He was suspended for a year without pay. A *New York Times* reporter who was working on a book on academic practices wrote at length about what happened. Ultimately, the man won his case against the university in the state court. The contributing editor of the NYRB while reviewing the book agreed with the author that the treatment of the Professor was unfair and that the categories of race, ethnicity and gender and sexual orientation can be deeply suspect as accounts of identity, that the self-conception they teach the students when they are presented in a monolithic form can be deeply pernicious, they can be used to sponsor as an interest group politics that is fundamentally inimical to the notion of the common "I". He pointed to the dangers of the speech codes that can lead to the abandonment of the principles of free expression. The censor, Lukeman wrote, always rings twice. At the same time, however, he insisted with much force—something that means a great deal to editors—in defence of these principles of free expression, a minority opinion must be brought about by meticulously collected accounts of violation, which must have an imaginative sense of why people feel offended. He found the book under review wanting in several instances that he explained in detail and concluded that the author accusing multi-culturalists of distortion, exaggeration and suppression of evidence had resorted to some of the same methods himself. Naturally, the indignant author responded with thousands of words in defence. It is, Silvers felt, in the close and inevitably contentious examination of rhetoric and evidence about such questions, an openness to debate over them, openness to criticism about their own reviews, that the responsibility of a book review editor lies and in trying to meet that responsibility there is no way to avoid opinions that are highly critical, irreverent, skeptical, irascible, outspoken, against the grain and hardly correct.

Shobhana Bhattacharji talking about the three Indian review journals in English said that they are essentially liberal. "The English newspapers and journals that carry reviews are also, on the whole, liberal though they tend to shade off into the extreme Right. Unfortunately such liberalism seems to imply scholarly interest in books and ideas cut off from events that surround us. A detached, clinical assessment of a book is especially unwelcome at this time because the political Right and Left and the entire political spectrum seem to be using the same rhetoric but not chasing the same goals. Both lots are trying to tap the thoughtful and persuadable reader and it requires an astute perception to see the difference between them. If the liberal review journals are to be of any use in persuading readers away from Hitler's progeny they need to be less academically austere, less detached and relate the rhetoric of what they review and how they review to its social effects. This is not a time for sweetness and light. In the early 19th century

Whose Development:
An Ethnography of Aid

EMMA CREWE AND ELIZABETH HARRISON

This book is on ethnography of development in practice. It builds on recent work in the anthropology of development in its examination of the evolution and persistence of a number of key ideas about gender, technology and race. It explores how these are rooted in both material practices and ideologies, notably the Enlightenment and colonialism, but goes beyond previous studies which have tended to focus mainly on the apparently monolithic power of the developers.

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in England an ideological war was in full spate and the reviewers supportive. Our condition is not very different. So, lets take off those academic gloves or blinkers or whatever and join the fight."

Ritu Menon interjected to say that these comments directed the people in the room to think about some of the very important issues that confronted them, whether they are reviewers or publishers or writers and that was, how does a book-reviewing journal play the role of interlocutor? And if it is going to play the role of an intellectual journal, how was it to be done? It also raised questions about centre and periphery, who was the opinion maker, who were the makers of the ideas and where were these ideas and their responses generated?

HISTORY OF INDIAN PUBLISHING

Ravi Dayal briefly recounted the history of Indian publishing in the past fifty years. He began by saying "no one quite knows how many publishers of books there are in India, but estimates place the number at around twelve thousand, they are a mixed lot, not only because of the languages they publish in and the number of titles produced, but also in the range of activities. Apart from the private publishers there are about a thousand government or semi-government institutions that mushroomed largely in the first two decades of independence. They not only make official reports available and the sort of government material produced anywhere in the world but have made forays into general publishing and over the decades established a near monopoly of text book publishing with a vast network of states and schools. Together, these government institutions consume about 70 per cent of the paper available in India for books and form the largest publishing conglomerate in the country. Their produce is undistinguished and their functioning lazy and they have done little to add to the stature of Indian publishing.

"Such vibrance and variety of literature that exists in Indian publishing today brings it mostly from the exertion of private publishers even though they have been largely excluded from servicing the capacious school-markets which has nourished publishing elsewhere. With the 16 major Indian languages accounting for the rest of the 50 per cent in varying degrees, much of the publishing in the Indian languages has been mostly of poetry and fiction with comparatively little scholarly and reference material coming from them, English language publishing has been primarily educational and scholarly. But over the past fifty years or so the range of general books and creative writing in English language has grown and improved very substantially. Publishers are, of course, habitual grumblers about rising costs and the state of the market, but it seems clear that publishing has come of age in post independence India and should prosper further as literacy spreads further and the national economy grows.

"In 1947, publishers like everyone else in the country were confronted by a dauntingly harsh environment. The country was in turmoil after partition, of its 350 million inhabitants only 17 per cent were literate and they were scattered over a vast area, further fractured into many language groups. The freedom movement generated a good deal of political writing and several distinguished scholars had made pathbreaking contributions. Bengal had garnered a rich crop of creative writers and all the regions of the country had been stirred to various degree by the new intellectual and literary movements that helped by moulding Indian minds. But English language publishing played a seminal and catalytic role in the spread and development of ideas in India since 1947 predominated by three British publishing houses—the OUP founded in 1912 in India, MacMillan founded in 1903, Longman's founded in 1906 who concentrated on importing books from abroad and producing books for the colonial education system but also greatly encouraging Indian scholarship and thought. OUP India, in particular, developed over the years a lively but a small general list and in Masani's *Our India* and Jim Corbett's books it had some best sellers in the 1940s. Generally, however, sales were slow and do not appear to have encouraged major investments in areas other than text books.

"By the mid '60s it was evident that the infrastructure of India's intellectual life, was not only considerably larger, but more active than in 1947. The level of academic writing and publishing witnessed a seachange around then. The intellectual seeding that occurred through the major universities after '47 nourished the general level of debate and performance in innumerable areas, including creative writing. It has also provided a receptive audience for books, particularly for those written by Indians, that has led to a lively interaction between academic disciplines and writers in general. Fifty years ago, most of the ideas discussed, seemed to originate in Britain and sometimes, in America or Europe. What with these democratic institutions and boisterous debate, India remains exuberantly open to ideas and views from everywhere, liberal flow of books from abroad has always been encouraged.

"In the immediate aftermath of independence, most Indians thought, probably that it was right for English to be removed from the country, innumerable strategies were devised to encourage the use of Indian languages and starve out English. Publishing slumped, as a consequence, that year. However, English not only survived, but its use dramatically increased from the '60s onwards. English is the mother tongue of a mere hundred and twenty-five thousand, but the conservative estimate, based on student enrollment and employment statistics indicates that perhaps 80 million Indians know and use functional English. There have been no head counts of English-knowers in India unlike with the Indian languages, 80 millions may perhaps be startling but it is fairly correct.

"Over the past fifty years publishing has been shaped by and reflects all these developments. It has been an exciting time for those connected with the making of books and it has been associated with the spread of new ideas and writing whether it is editors or business people. It must be recognized that despite all the encouraging trends, India's publishers have usually had to function in an exceedingly difficult environment and in the face of heavy odds. The economy may have grown but in our sphere it hasn't grown fast enough and then we have had to live with all manners of scarcities. The English-knowing reader, the backbone of the market, is still scattered over a very wide area and difficult to reach, in the absence of good bookshops in all but the larger cities. If the material condition of life in India improves in the coming decades then forty per cent of the population will surely be drawn into the net of literacy at some stage. Publishers have much to look forward to when this comes to pass.

"Thirty-six years ago when I started off in publishing, most of the books reviewed in our papers were published abroad, neither the reviews nor the books seemed terribly relevant and the review pages generally seemed somewhat haphazard. There were of course, some notable exceptions such as Shyamlal of the *Times of India* and some earnest Indian language journals, but generally for serious discussion of ideas we looked to journals originating outside India. This no doubt, reflected the output of ideas here, but the overall scene seemed derivative. With a widening base of the educational system the vast numbers of authors in India over the past few decades, at least, the quality of reviewing too has improved noticeably with papers like *The Book Review* providing a fine forum for an exchange and evaluation of ideas. As a publisher I find reviews essential for the books I publish more useful than a general mailing. Widespread reviewing and wide-spread literary gossip backed by presence in book-shops are the best ways of getting books off the ground."

TEXT BOOKS AND BOOKS FOR CHILDREN

Shobhana Bhattacharji felt that children and young adults are the two other groups who should be important to all those who want to sell books. "They are going to be the market and more importantly the repository of ideas." She said they were not only ignored in the seminars, they are generally ignored in the choice of books to be reviewed and in the language of reviews. For instance, why are text books not reviewed when they are probably the largest selling books in India? "Children, in my experience, devour books of all kinds like vaccum cleaners, even classics, when they know about them. From a recent survey of book-shops we learnt that even parents who haven't read them tout the classics and book-shops sell them. I think it would be good to review them as sales strategy as well as to create new readers. I believe young adults are looking for important ideals and direction. Review articles can provide the required direction."

"Good editors allow reviewers to read upon the subject and plenty of words to set out issues. Personally, my favourite reviewers are those who teach me about a subject and give me an academic, political or whatever stand on it. The blind leading the blind approach, this in E.P. Thompson's wonderful phrase—'the bland leading the bland approach' to reviewing is boring and worthless. If I wouldn't buy a book presented in this way why should I presume that the young adult will? ' "Our mission is educational in the broadest sense" is how the U.S seminarist—Jack Brighton, put it (Seminar on book reviewing organized by Chandra Chari at the University of Urbana-Champaign, Illinois on 31 July 1997—report in *The Book Review*, October 1997). He placed his mission in the context of the economic and political calculus, by which making money is seen as the only legitimate role of publishing houses. Books that sell do not always push past the known and given, but it is these pushers who challenge the world and alter it, and if responsible reviewers promote such books how do publishers react to such promotion? Do they feel reviewers will be reviewers and leave it at that? Wouldn't a dialogue rather than dismissiveness help! However out of date this may sound I think those of us in the communication business, must take the social results of our writing and publishing seriously, especially in the face of the social and

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economic calculus mentioned earlier. As the seminarist already quoted has said, 'books that have ideas, information, education, perspective, enlightenment, relation require subsidies to publish and buy'. Perhaps we have to resurrect the idea of what is good for the nation and work together to push it through. I have, however, more than a nagging doubt about this notion that comes straight from early 19th century in England, when periodicals turned into review journals which dealt with issues in and around books. At that time, of course, seminars on reviewing were not held, because reviewers never doubted that they were forming opinions. With this ancestry for modern review journals we could ask whether we are simply interested in hanging on to a way of life that has no relevance any longer. But the fact is that we face not so much an informationglut but as a premium on mere information without any equivalent stress on analysing that information or its social purpose. It is a new positivism and far madder than it seemed to be at the end of the 19th century.

"The shrinking of space for reviews in the audio-visual media means that the taken for granted approach, not just to the style but to the contents of reviews won't do any more. The young adult is not the only reader the reviewers can address. The printed word is very valuable for a lot of people who have for the last few years felt butteressed into a corner by the T.V., a packaging rather than a content mode of academic and journalistic writing and a starvation of funds for the humanities in the universities. There is a need for genuine political and cultural insights, in other words public opinion has become an issue and although we could slide into despair by asking which public, we could also resort to some 19th century vigour and consider the role of intellectuals and the liberal middle class in leadership."

One thing Robert Silvers felt very strongly about was that while most books that were produced were text books and were for children, they existed in a kind of limbo and if they were not sufficiently reviewed may affect the lives of millions of children. The NYRB has from time to time reviewed some of these text books but it is never enough. The text books are kept in their own strange pasture and they are somehow unexamined and it is an enormous question because it is often a highly corrupt and a highly rigged quasi-racket—huge procurement by government offices of text books with public money from schools who are often producing work which is, subject to all sorts of pressures. In America, there are terrible pressures from state purchasing agents about political correctness, incorrectness etc. It is time that writers, editors and publishers took it as a central responsibility and asked themselves "what are these text books, who'll write them, how good are they, what kind of language do they use, what kind of picture of the world do they present, is that what we really want children to learn, are they at the level for young children to have their imagination gripped?"

THE ROLE OF THE EDITOR

In response to a query by Professor Desai, Silvers said that he believed that an editor should be intimidated by nothing and should respond as genuinely as he can using all his best intelligence to make the review as clear and as intelligible and as good as it can be within the range of the talents of the writers. Editors should not hesitate to intervene, just use their intelligence and sensibility and think whether this piece of writing is 'as strong, as clear, as interesting as it can possibly be,' realizing that it will never be as strong and as interesting as you would dream of. But trying to convey to the author how it might be improved often involves the most difficult battle or exchange with these writers.

The loneliness of all writing is something that we are all aware of—"The writer alone with a book, trying to make judgements, often going on too long, not knowing where to stop." Silvers said we all know how difficult it is to write any piece of literary work and people are often grateful for some advice. One should intervene as best one can.

ACADEMIC REVIEWING

Rajiv Bhargava asked: "What is it that the writer of an academic book expects from a book review? Now, there is a very simple and obvious answer to that question which is that the author expects that the book review will provide very simple information on what the book is about, will give a very brief summary and thesis of the book and perhaps raise one of these substantive issues which are part of the text. Now, I think that is a job that needs to be done but best left to the publisher. But what the author is not looking for is the worst possible interpretation and arguments about his book, which is then knocked down which happens quite regularly. What the author is looking for is the best possible interpretation Perhaps, interpretation that he also only partly recognizes as his own but which he will be very happy to own up as his own. How is that going to happen? The conditions under which that will happen—one is that people must be reasonable, they should be openminded, they should be willing to listen to and respond to evidence, argument and they should be willing to listen to each converse with the other. The second is part of this condition of being reasonable, that they should be able to practice a very simple, familiar principle—enter the conceptual world of the author, feel things from his perspective, to begin with they should be able to grasp what he is trying to do in the book and very often this can be done by simply looking at the introduction. I'm saying this because this is something which an author, a reviewer of my book just didn't do, he probably didn't even look at the introduction, where I had said very clearly this is not a history of ideas, this is a book on methodological individualism, and I said that I'm going to talk about methodological individualism and there are very important links between methodological individualism and political and moral individualism but these links, these very important links maybe a very interesting topic for another book, but these are not going to be discussed in my book. I also said very clearly that although there are some very interesting people who are associated with methodological individualism, I'm not going to discuss them as this is an analytical treatment so I'm not going to discuss each of the authors individually. But it is precisely these I was criticised for. I was told that this book should be ahistorical, the views of each author should be taken more seriously and very important links with moral and political individualism have not been explored and so on and so forth. So, I think it is very important for any book reviewer to just to be able to grasp what exactly the author is about. Well, what can be done to generate this culture? I think that is a much larger question that takes us beyond the world of books and onto very interesting issues about how we must restructure our public culture and public experience."

MARKETING STRATEGIES

Rea Hederman said that "there is no mass market for the readers of the *New York Review*. We cannot send a mailing order the same way as the *Time* and *Newsweek* can and expect any percentage of the total American market to respond. We have to look very carefully at who, we think, might be a potential reader of the *New York Review* and how we can go and find them. The most effective way that we have is through direct mail, with subscribers lists from other American magazines. Our best sales is through good quality bookshops and good news stands. We send them free issues of the *New York Review* and ask them if they would not like to buy a certain number of copies directly from us, rather than go into it through a distributor. The third way that we do it is to exchange advertising—it is a sort of cross-fertilisation.

"In using direct mail for sales we are always looking for new ways to tell readers about our publication and the one effort that has been most successful for us is to basically give a free sample of our publications—like the anthology of selected pieces from the first 30 years of the *New York Review*. By having our own publication we can advertise to our own subscribers and not have to depend on distributors whom we found to be very unreliable.

"Another thing that we have just started using but which is turning out to be extremely effective for us is the internet. We have a website on the internet that is attracting a lot of traffic. We put up five or six pieces on our site, from our current issue of the *New York Review* and then we have a subscription information. We are finding that each month there are 70 people subscribing, just on the basis of the internet and these subscriptions are from all over the world, it totally eliminates distribution. You don't have to find the people, they find you."

AMERICAN PUBLISHER'S ENTRY INTO INDIA

When asked if American publishers are afraid to publish in India because of the pirating of their information Rea Hederman said, "I called a number of publishers before coming to India and talked to several lawyers in detail about intellectual property rights and everyone gave me exactly the same answer and that is that you can have a contract or licence and it is entirely enforceable, it is not a real problem for American publishers in India."

Urvashi Butalia began with the concern expressed by Henry Mendelsohn that American publishers were reluctant to publish in India because Indian publishers are suspected, by and large of, being pirates. Now, "this", she said, "coming from a country which is behind the World Trade Organization, which is trying to patent neem which has been our property for centuries, and which took the zero from us seems to be extremely strange. There are two kind of barriers or two kinds of problems we come up against when talking about publishing between two Continents and in this case, the Continents are clearly India and the United States. The first of these is an attitudinal barrier and that has to do with things like this—

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the perception that by and large, we are pirates. Now, we in Kali, we are a small publishing company, we publish a number of academic books, some of which get picked up in the United States by University presses and get put on courses and we routinely receive requests for photocopying these things for which we cannot be paid and they can be put into text books for students. Now, if that is not pirating, that is not infringing copyrights, I don't know what is. We should acknowledge that this is a world-wide problem, that there isn't really a question of a high moral ground that one country can occupy in relation to another and it is quite true that India is a signatory to the copyright convention and by and large, ethical publishers in India, as anywhere else in the world stick by that, unethical ones in India as anywhere else in the world don't. So, that is one of the attitudinal problems we face in relation to this. The others are some of the things Ravi talked about—he talked about 52 per cent literacy in this country, now, with 52 per cent literacy which is not enough clearly in Indian terms but if you look at it in terms of numbers of aliterate we are talking about 400/450 million people which is not small, so we are not an illiterate country generating an illiterate literature but we are a country which is actually generating several fairly complex, fairly rich literatures. Last week there was a big French publisher here who talked about the conditions that make it interesting and possible for different literatures to enter different countries and one of the things he said was that there has to be a receptivity, there has to be an openness, there has to be an understanding, a desire to know the literature of another country and that I think is very closely connected with things which are non-literary, that is connected with things like economics, things like histories that countries have with politics and so on. It is no surprise, really, that in the United States there is interest in the literatures of Latin America, there is interest in the literature of Vietnam, interest in holocaust literature, there is interest in literature of Taiwan now mainland China as well, I mean, it comes as no surprise either that there is interest in England in the literature of India and so on. But, of course, how can a country know the literature of another country except through a language in common?

"Ian Jack did an issue of *Granta* on India some months ago; several of the writers who figured in that have said often that they have had so much exposure from that one issue which has sold hundred thousand copies all over the world, they are all writers who write in English and this has actually given them an access that they did not earlier have. So, it is frightening the kind of access English has and the kind of influence it has, but there it is. I think because we are a Third World country, the general perception is that perhaps things coming out of here, whether in English or otherwise are not quite upto the mark or not quite good enough. So, that is another sort of attitudinal barrier that we face. In fact, when I was thinking about this, I was thinking that the only thing that travels outside of India, easily without prejudice is Indian food and that is because, (a) it is not attached to a language and (b) it carries with it an immediate adaptibility to the conditions and tastes of any other country. It is not only books that don't get out, it is also all kinds of other products like cars that don't get out and of course, it doesn't happen the other way round."

To Indira Chandrashekhar there was no one publishing scene in India. "There are many many publishers who represent, often different contradictory contexts. I'm not only talking about size here or revenues but even in terms of the focus, the specialisation, the reason for which you are in publishing to begin with, and, partly, it has to do with the history of publishing in India.

"Efficiency and inefficiency is not marked by your borders, I mean, India publishers are not necessarily more inefficient or tardy or less quality conscious my experience in co-publishing has been that I have waited for replies for decisions to be made, without interest ever waning, in the project, for, well, more than two years in one instance, in a book that I obviously decided to go ahead and publish because I can't wait for a publisher abroad to respond before I can go ahead with my plans and after two years there is a response which is positive which is affirmative, 'Yes, we would like to take so many copies of your book Please sell us rights, let's get into the thing,' and then, again, there is a lull of a year or so. I don't know whether this is the general case. For small publishers these are experiences which only reinforce one's resolve to continue in whatever manner one can. There are no generalisations in this business or in this industry, if you can call it that and one has to feel one's way forward with instinct very often and possibly with the resolve to just go ahead and something will come of it at some point.

"We find a number of American publishing houses and publishers from other parts of the world entering the Indian market in a very big way. Presently Scholastic books has entered the Indian market. They are a huge presence just in terms of the number of titles and the subsidised prices that they are able to sell their books in the Indian market. They are good books, they are well produced, why shouldn't an Indian child not buy a Scholastic book rather than a book published by an Indian publisher except in terms of the content or whatever. So, these are big presences that we have to come to terms with, live, with I think, harmoniously find our own little places."

TRANSLATION OF INDIAN FICTION IN ENGLISH

"While everybody knows and has been discussing a very great upsurge of English novels emerging from India, one aspect that has been less often talked about and not talked about at all, today, is another phenomenon that is also acquiring a boom-status within the country and that is translation of Indian fiction in English," Dr. Meenakshi Mukherji said. "What we now witness is the emergence of a systematic and promotional production by institutions and established publishing houses who carefully select the text to be translated, control the quality and texture of the translation, provide a suitable context for each book, introductions translator's prefaces and notes. The total number of Indian fictional texts available in English is not negligible today although it is only the tip of the iceberg when compared to what remains untranslated, numerically, it is comparable to Indian novels written in English which too used to be a trickle at one time, but in the last two decades have become a virtual flood. Thus, we have two numerically comparable sets—Indian novels written in English and Indian novels translated into English, and what I want to ask you about is the blatant asymmetry in the reception of the two texts. The writers who write in English, at least, the best of them attain worldwide visibility, attract international media attention, get translated into several European languages. Writers like Vikram Seth, Vikram Chandra, Rohinton Mistry and Arundhati Roy, Mukul Keshavan and quite a few others are reviewed and interviewed widely, invited to distant corners of the world to give readings, but at the same time, not many outside the borders of India have heard the names of Ismat Chugtai, Gopinath Mohanty, Shivram Karanth or Shisherendu Mukhopadhyay, whose work is in Urdu, Oriya, Kannada and Bangla respectively. Language cannot be cited as a barrier in this case to accessibility because English translation of at least one novel by each author is available fairly easily for anyone who would care to look for them.

"But who should care to look for them and why? Books do not exist in the abstract realm of aesthetic values. People read books either because the desire to read specific text is created through discussion in the media, which are then seductively marketed like any other consumer product; alternatively they are read if they are put on reading lists in school/college courses. I have personally been involved in many debates and I know there is tremendous resistance to putting translated texts on courses here. Hypothetically, an English translation, say Bhalachandra Nemade's novel *Ghosla* or O.V. Vijayan's *Legend of Khasak* published by Penguin and MacMillan become available not only to Indians who do not know Marathi or Malayalam but also to readers in Australia, Canada, USA or England. How many actually read them is, however, another matter.

For one thing, hardly any of these translated texts are ever reviewed abroad and reviewing is one way books get known and perhaps the only way when the publishers do not have promotional budgets which is often the case with Indian

Negotiating Reproductive Rights:
Women's Perspectives Across Countries and Cultures

Edited by Rosalind P. Petchesley and Karen Judd

How do women across diverse countries, cultures and situations develop a sense of entitlement or self-determination with regard to their position as reproducers?

This books grows out of The International Reproductive Rights Research Action Group's four years of collaborative research and analysis in seven countries. Based on interviews with hundreds of women in both urban and rural settings, different age groups, and diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds, the book asks when, whether and how women express a sense of entitlement or self-determination in everyday decisions about childbearing, work, marriage, fertility control and sexual relations.

Published by ZED Books, pp. 320, Hb £45.00 $65.00, Pb £14.95 $22.50

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publishers and Indian publishers are the ones who bring out these books. The question to ask here, and I do not know whether the publishing professionals here can answer my question—why do the publishing houses in London/New York/ San Fransisco never touch these books, but publish and promote Indian novels originally written in English, not always only the best but sometimes second rate ones also? And, the same publishers have no difficulty in publishing and selling translations from Latin America, Czechoslovakia, or from other parts of the world and securing worldwide media coverage for them.

"Some of you will recall that in 1989 Timothy Brenen proposed and gave currency to a new category of writers called the Third World Cosmopolitans, who are globally visible, who the *New York Review of Books* and *Times Literary Supplement* hail as the interpreters and authentic voices of the Third World. According to Brenen this group included Garcia Marquez, Dereck Walcott, Salman Rushdie and Bharati Mukherji and a few others. These writers emerge from and often write about a non-western culture, but their mastery over the current idiom of the metropolitan meta-language of narrative, ensures them a favourable reception in the western world where the centres of publication and evaluation are located. Significantly, even though this list includes Latin American writers who have been translated into English, Indians, in order to belong to this club must write in English, to begin with. There is a tacit erasure of the diversity of India, here the writers in English, consciously or unconsciously present an India which is accessible to even those who have no direct experience of living here. The Hindi or Tamil writer evidently has a much more specific and a focussed audience. This may be one reason for the disinterest in these novels outside the country. But why the same logic would not apply in the case of novels from Argentina, Chile or Columbia is not very clear to me.

"The very few Indian writers who are read abroad, either academically or—I think mostly in academic courses, they get a hearing through the mediation of scholars based in USA. Gayatri Spivak's story about translation of Mahashveta Devi's novel is a case in point. She has been writing for many years, she has been available in Indian translations before, but until somebody with a great academic standing in USA decided to translate and to introduce her, she was not known outside India. Similarly, I think is the case with Ananthamurthi and the translation of his book *Samskara* by A.K. Ramanujan, he has other novels which to me are far more exciting and complex, gets prescribed outside India and because it is prescribed outside India, I think, after a time-lag we are also thinking of doing it here. At the moment, I believe the Feminist Press in the US is publishing a collection of short stories by Lalitambika Antarjanam, a Malayalam writer, but they have to do it with an introduction by Meena Alexander, who is based in New York and has a certain reputation as a poet in the USA, she knows the region from where this writer comes, but she has no literary knowledge of the language from which these are being translated.

"To mark the fiftieth year of independence, several journals outside India have brought out literary issues, judging by the contents of which one would think that in India literature is written only in one language and that is English. How does one explain this ignorance wilful or otherwise, about the ferment of literary activity in a dozen or more vibrant languages in the country? The new generation of English writers who are being exposed to the world, partly because some of them happen to be excellent, but also because they write in English and are published abroad. But they do not always represent the diversity and heterogenity of the writing scene in India. "

Geetha Dharmarajan then said that while "we have always been very happy to take what has come from outside and know the bylanes and pathways of Dickens's England, we don't even know what Chandni Chowk looks like while living in India. So, I think, what is really needed here, is a pride in ourselves, more pride in what we have, what we can translate for ourselves because we have some great literature and fantastic writers."

U.I.

Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy

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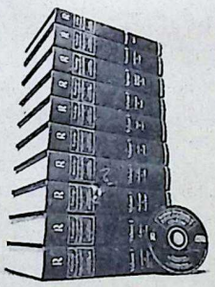

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More Promising than Fulfilling

Arundhati Deosthale

KHATUL

Manjul Bhagat

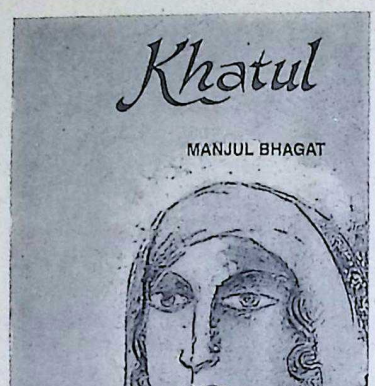
National Publishing House, New Delhi, 1996, pp. 112, Rs. 60.00

When Manjul Bhagat who has earlier given us enjoyable works like *Anaro* and *Toota Hua Indradhanush* takes up a new canvas, that of a beautiful young girl's uprootedness and exile from her strife-torn home state i.e. Afghanistan the expectations are naturally high—Anne Frank like situation? One wonders. But to all those looking for a sensitive probe into wounded psyche, the book comes as a big letdown.

The whole world has witnessed in shock and grief what Afghanistan has been through in the last few years. The brutally rocked socio-political situation, unremitting anarchy caused by change of regimes and Russian intervention, and spurts of gory violence have compelled millions of innocent men and women to flee the country and seek refuge elsewhere. India, the neighbouring country with its accommodative democracy has been the choice of a large influx of Afghani refugees who have heart-rending tales to tell. Against such a backdrop when a creative writer addresses the issue of what it is like for a young girl to be a fugitive in an alien country facing an uncertain future, a whole gamut of possibilities is thrown open.

In fact *Khatul* with is superfluous treatment of the subject trivializes the issue. Khatul, the central character of the novelette despite the harrowing situation that she is placed in, remains a stranger to her readers, failing to evoke their sympathy. The laboured narrative meandering through trivialities and details doesn't pick up and the somewhat abrupt termination comes as though the author herself is bored with the purposeless journey and has decided to call it a day. Some women writers somehow don't seem to do away with their preoccupation with food and festivities, cloths and accessories, relations and pets.

The author's confusion about her approach to the theme becomes evident from the blurb itself. "Aching with memories, yearning for a family and home she (Khatul) empathizes with Zari Khanum's misery feeling stronger of the two and more capable of dealing



with the blows of life as in her own words, she has seen war, whereas poor Zari has gone through the deception and duplicity of a single Khan—her husband. The Tormentor is always faceless, with no nationality, a 'soul less' creature inflicting senseless *pain* upon its victims unaware of himself as its possible next prey".

Is not there a major self-contradiction in the lines quoted here? The "Tormentor" in neither of the cases i.e. Khatul and Zari, is 'faceless' and 'without nationality'. This also leads to another question about Manjul Bhagat's choice of language namely English with which she appears uncomfortable. Examples:

"Her fair face was flushed with happiness and the Sun shone on it in an e[xq]uisite blend of silver and gold" (p. 1[4]

"Auntie, except for death nothi[ng] can sunder them apart from their trib[e] Khatul once remarked. While pronou[n]cing this verdict the contours of Khatu[l]'s visage suddenly wintered like t[he] changing season. Her eyes had beco[me] clouded, receding into the past" (p. 1[5]

Be this original or translated fr[om] Hindi, the language is awkward.

The other three stories in the bo[ok] 'Steps', 'Nisha' and 'Bebeji' form t[he] better part of the book. When Manj[ul] Bhagat is on her homeground, talki[ng] about the typical Indian middle cl[ass] people the stories come alive desp[ite] the hampered style. Both 'Nisha' a[nd] 'Bebeji' confront their respective pro[b]lems in the immediate relationship[s] with sound emotional logic. Bebeji [is] an old woman who is deserted by h[er] sons to cope with life all by herself. S[he] finds herself a son in Nikka Tandoo[r]wala and at an appropriate mome[nt] makes her choice clear to her biologic[al] son who has all along been taking h[er] for granted. 'Nisha' too displays exem[p]lary inner strength in fighting again[st] several odds that her typical conserv[a]tive middle class family tries to stall h[er] with. She breaks free quietly an[d] steadily to be herself, to be differen[t]. In all *Khatul* is more promising tha[n] fulfilling.

Arundhati Deosthale writes in an[d] translates from Marathi, English and Hin[di] and is presently working with Scholast[ic] India.

ABC Tumble Down D

Joya Banerji

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MADHU KALASH, BOOKS 2 AND 3, By Prabha Sharma and Vibha Saksena, Rs. 22.00, Rs. 24.00

MADHU KALASH, BOOKS 4 AND 5, By Abha Rai, Rs. 26.00 and Rs. 28.00
Madhuban Educational Books

Learning a new language can be tricky at the best of times. Especially if you are between the ages of three and six and your parents are contemplating sending you to school to learn English. Yet it can be fun. Here's a clutch of books for children to prove how. Textbooks, supplementary readers, educational books. Books to sink milk teeth into. Books that take children on what the publishers, Madhuban Educational Books, a division of Vikas, have chosen to call a "joyous voyage of discovery". A trifle excessive, perhaps—they may not be the entire voyage, but they certainly are the launching pad.

In the early years, when their vocabulary is being formed, children need books that are visually stimulating, primarily to generate and capture interest. The elements that matter in a picture word book are obviously pictures and words, how good the illustrations are and how well the words reflect a child's immediate neighbourhood as well as the changing social scenario. These two books seem adequate enough, although the quality of illustrations could have been better. As well as the quality of printing. Inspite of a few odd inclusions like daffodils an[d] sweetpeas in the flowers section and [a] fire station that looks like it belongs [in] a quaint German town instead of a[n] Indian one, it must be said that th[e] vegetable pages have lovely gree[n] parwals, tindas, laukis and okra, an[d] the "Things We See in Town" page ha[s] a Mother Dairy milk booth and a scoote[r] stand. Although "In the Hospital" w[e] meet male doctors and female nurses [in] the "Work people do "there is [a] dentist who is a 'lady'. The only othe[r] women doing any "work" are selling [a] vegetables or books. This may soun[d] like nit-picking, but it is well-know[n] that by the time children are seven o[r] eight, their world-view is well-estab[-] lished. Books like these contribute muc[h] to their view of the world and need t[o] be a wee bit more wary of stereotyping.

A lovely set of two colouring books [is] beautifully drawn by Anita Sen, baby [a]nimals and familiar fruit and vegeta[-]bles that would lighten up any nursery [or] school-child's life. And good value, too.

Large format activity books for three to five year olds, put together by Veen[a]

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Sharma and illustrated admirably by Girija Singh. Designed so that the child can progress from "the simple to the complex", there are pages and pages of alphabet, numbers, colours, shapes, opposites, rhymes (Hindi ones too, nice touch), pre-writing patterns, the family, the body, the home, matching shapes, sizes... whew! Activities guaranteed to hone the observation, visual discrimination, eye-hand coordination, sensory discrimination and environmental awareness of children, as the foreword promises, and to keep the little terrors quiet for a precious five minutes!

A brightly coloured, cheerful book of the alphabet, colours, shapes, numbers and rhymes with lovely illustrations by Girija Singh. This book could do with some Hindi rhymes.

A great hat-trick of activity books that describe a child's immediate environment—her home, school and town. Much the same concepts found here as in other books of this nature, with one difference. The sections aren't serially devoted to animals, then to family, then to school, etc. All the concepts are interleaved. Festivals intermingle with colours, leaves with sizes, birds with alphabets, fruits with shapes, and mazes with a few games and crosswords thrown in for good measure. Illustrations by Girija Singh, liven up the pages.

Book 2, the textbook, is well-balanced and properly thought out. The text is written to emphasize the dignity of labour, helping others, good neighbourliness, courtesy and manners, that all religions ought to be respected and that festivals mean fun and joy. Towards the end of the book the section on the earth and our environment draws the child's attention to the concepts of pollution and ecological balance and introduces the idea of "history". An excellent primer.

And now to the language of mathematics. Illustrated mathematics textbooks! Who'd have thought of it when we were young! But in the age of "learning is fun", illustrations work wonders—Girija Singh added value yet again. Concepts are explained simply via diagrams and pictures and thus are easily grasped. Starting from simple addition and subtraction in Book 1 and progressing to multiplication and division of fractions, decimals, area, volume, simple interest, speed-distance-time, profit and loss and geometry in Book 5, the textbooks cover much ground, as demanded by the new educational policy syllabus in mathematics. A first cursory glance through the books and parents will step back in horror at the amount their children have to learn. But these textbooks make learning relatively painless. My son loves his math textbook (Number Fun 4)—not only does it teach him about factors, HCF, LCM, fractions shapes and angles with very little effort on his part (or so it seems), but he can copy the pictures of grinning octopuses, smirking cats and zooming rockets on to cards and give them to his teachers and friends. Two birds, one stone, happiness all around.

A set of easy-to-read Hindi supplementary readers written for seven to ten year olds, the *Madhu Kalash* series is such a good idea. These honey pots of books are brimful of sweet, simple stories with morals, diary entries, tales of famous people, poems, one act plays, humourous Akbar-Birbal tales, folk tales, tales of courage, the marvels of science, incidents in history as well as stories culled from the *Panchatantra* (luckily not too many). And as if that were not enough to keep our fidgeting children spellbound, there are interesting exercises, *Khel Khel Mein* and *Seekho Aur Sikhao*, at the end of each chapter. All that remains is a gentle nudge from parents to encourage their children's interest in *Madhu Kalash*. Though with all the additional distractions from Cartoon Network, *Sweet Valley*, cricket matches and comics, I wonder at the rate of success.

To coin a mixed metaphor, you can take a child to a honey pot but you must keep your fingers crossed.

Joya Banerji is editor, Kali for Women.

Communication

When a reviewer cursorily leafs through a book, at places misreading it, and then misquotes from it to suit her statements, misinterpretations and misrepresentations, the result is what Radhika Chopra has done in her review of my book *Women and Kinship: Comparative Perspectives on Gender in South and South-east Asia* (TBR, March 1998)). In the process, she has clearly misled the readers of *The Book Review*. Hence this reminder.

Chopra faults rights in the beginning by substituting kinship for gender and thus reversing my argument. On page 1, I write: 'My objective is to highlight certain issues that have remained largely neglected. It is my hunch that gender studies (as an interdisciplinary field) often leave out a consideration of kinship (emphasis added), either because it is thought irrelevant or because it is viewed as an immutable given'. Chopra picks up part of the sentence and writes... 'because gender (emphasis added) has been "largely neglected... because it is thought irrelevant or because it is viewed as an immutable given'. She has been able to do this only by misquoting me.

As far as feminist anthropologists' writings on kinship and gender during the last few decades are concerned, she had only to turn to note 1 of chapter 1 and she would have found a number of relevant references which I have given. In the same note, I have also explained what had been lacking in the treatment of women in kinship studies in anthropology.

Unfortunately, Chopra has failed to grasp the import of much of the ethnographic data presented from the two regions and their interconnections. My chapter on 'Bodily Processes and Limitations on Women' deals with menarche, menstruation and consequent vulnerability of women, pregnancy, childbirth, parturition and ethno-reproductive beliefs '... which tells us about notions concerning the roles of the two sexes in procreation and provide the rationale and the justification for rights—or lack of rights—over children and in inheritance and succession' (p. 76). After writing about the implications of the metaphor of the seed and the field and much else, I mention the Philippines saying that, while I could not get much material on this area, the 'Philippines seem to give equal importance to father's and mother's blood; two kinds of fluids have to mingle for conception to occur... the recognition of both parents accords with the bilateral kinship system' (p. 79).

Logically, this chapter should have been read along with the chapters on 'Management of Female Sexuality' and the 'Seclusion of Women'. I do refer the readers to them at appropriate moments, but what Chopra does is to make selective use of the contents of even this chapter and state that I have said all that I had to say on menstruation in South and south-east Asia in the space of two pages. This is clear misrepresentation. In fact, the chapter begins with 'For Muslims the association of napak (impure) for menstrual and parturient blood has a religious basis. Menstruation and parturition are polluted states during which women are forbidden to pray, fast or touch the *Quran*. This basic belief is common throughout south and south-east Asia, but there are distinct differences between the two regions. The acknowledgement of menarche as coming of age, demanding special circumscription is more marked in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan' (p. 70).

This also explains Jeffrey's observation regarding the Pirzada women that they are forbidden during the period of pollution to carry on those activities that connect them with their husband's means of livelihood (as priests of Nizamuddin Dargah). Thus they are forbidden to sew curtains for the saint's tomb or prepare sweets for the pilgrims.

This brings me to the last point. Chopra perceives a contradiction between the symbolism of blossoming and the threatening nature of menstrual blood, which, according to her, has remained unexplored in the book. Obviously she has missed many points made in the chapter and in the book. In Blanchett's words relating to the village of Miyapur in Bangladesh, 'Menstruation is impure but, if properly contained, it is also auspicious as it symbolizes and announces in a positive way a woman's generative potential' (quoted on page 71). This ties up with what I have written about Hindu India, that 'in many Indian languages menstruation is likened to flowering or blossoming—the necessary stage before fruit can appear' (p. 75). One of the meanings of pushpa (flower, blossom) is 'menstrual flux' and pushpakal is 'time of the menses' (Lokbharati Pramanik Kosh). In Tamil, 'a girl is given a bath when she is flowering' (Uma Chakravarthy). One expression I often heard in Chhattisgarh was 'unless a girl flowers, how can she bear fruit?' For this reason, menarche or first menstruation, although associated with pollution, is considered an auspicious event (combining auspicious and impure elements, as in birth. See T.N. Madan 1987:65). It is celebrated in many regions, as I have mentioned in the chapter.

At the same time, since menstrual blood is polluting, it is threatening in as much as it makes a menstruating woman vulnerable to being attacked by spirits and ghosts. She also has to be careful in avoiding deities lest they are angered. There are many other prohibitions, which may have to be followed in order to avoid rendering pure objects impure.

Another major threat which begins at the onset of puberty involves the complex of the awakening of the post-pubertal girl's sexual impulse, her becoming specially attractive to the opposite sex and, most importantly, her biological maturity in as much as she acquires the capacity to become pregnant, a state which is difficult of repudiation. '. . .[The message is clear: the girl has become a sexual being. This calls for restrained behaviour on her part and for protection and vigilance by others' (p. 75–76) for there is a threat to her purity. As Chanana has mentioned, in many places the age of puberty tends to coincide with the withdrawal of girls from school. I hope this will make clear my statement on page 75 that 'Patriliny and caste combine to create a perception of menstrual blood as particularly threatening, as I discuss on the chapter on women's sexuality'.

Unfortunately, the reviewer has failed to capture the contrast between south and south-east Asia. I would also like to make it clear that within these regions I have chosen specific populations under different kinship systems and also following different religions. The book has its limitations, but they have escaped the reviewer for she got obsessed with what was not my major concern. Opinions and concerns can differ, but what I find objectionable is the unacademic and irresponsible manner in which the review has been written.

Leela Dube

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MARG Publications, 1998, pp. 160, price not mentioned.

■ BIOGRAPHY

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Eminence Designs Pvt. Ltd., Mumbai, 1998, pp. 184, price not mentioned.

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This is a detailed and thoroughly documented account of the individuals, organizations and institutions that were influential in India in the promotion of education for Muslim girls in colonial India.
Oxford University Press, 1998, pp. 359, Rs. 575.00

Closing the Sacred Line: Women's Search for Political Power
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Few women participate in politics, fewer still make it to any significant position in the party or government and finally only very few are committed to and closely identify with women's issues and the women's movement. This book looks at these issues in the context of the political parties—their history and ideologies, political commitments, organizational structure, mode of functioning and the place of women's organizations within the party.

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Rina Pal
Midnapore the land of revolt kept close contact with the Indian National Congress. From the confidential political report of the British Government we know that Midnapore has been the scene of the principal Congress activities.
Ratna Prakashan, Calcutta, 1996, pp. 230, Rs. 350.00

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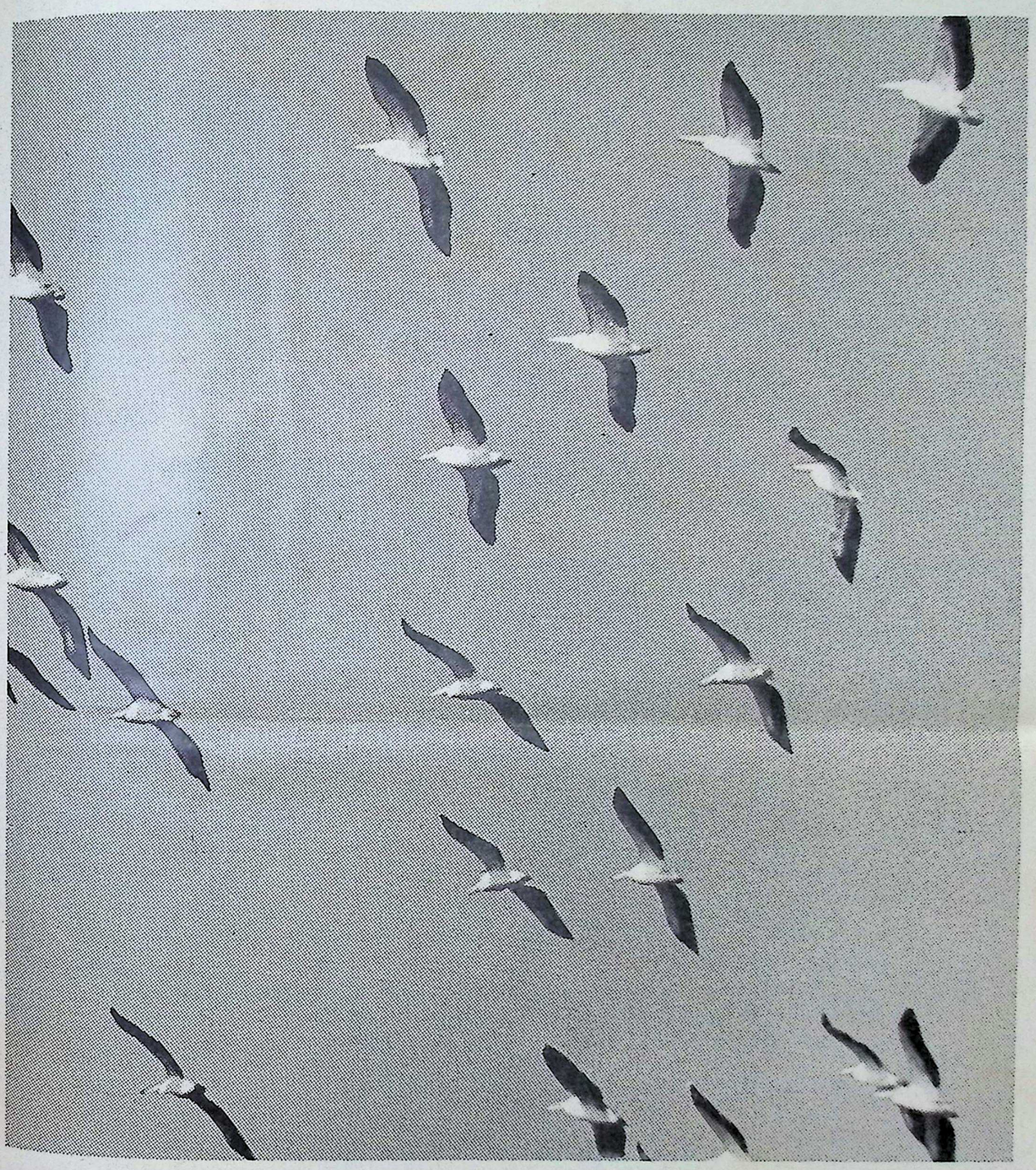

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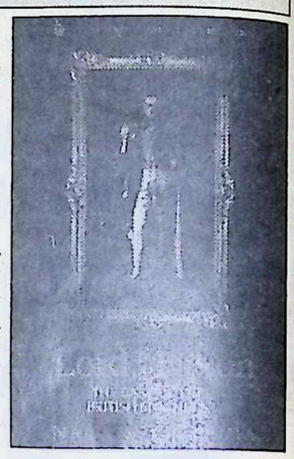

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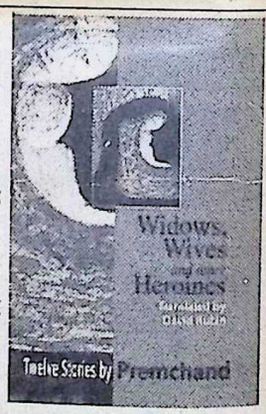

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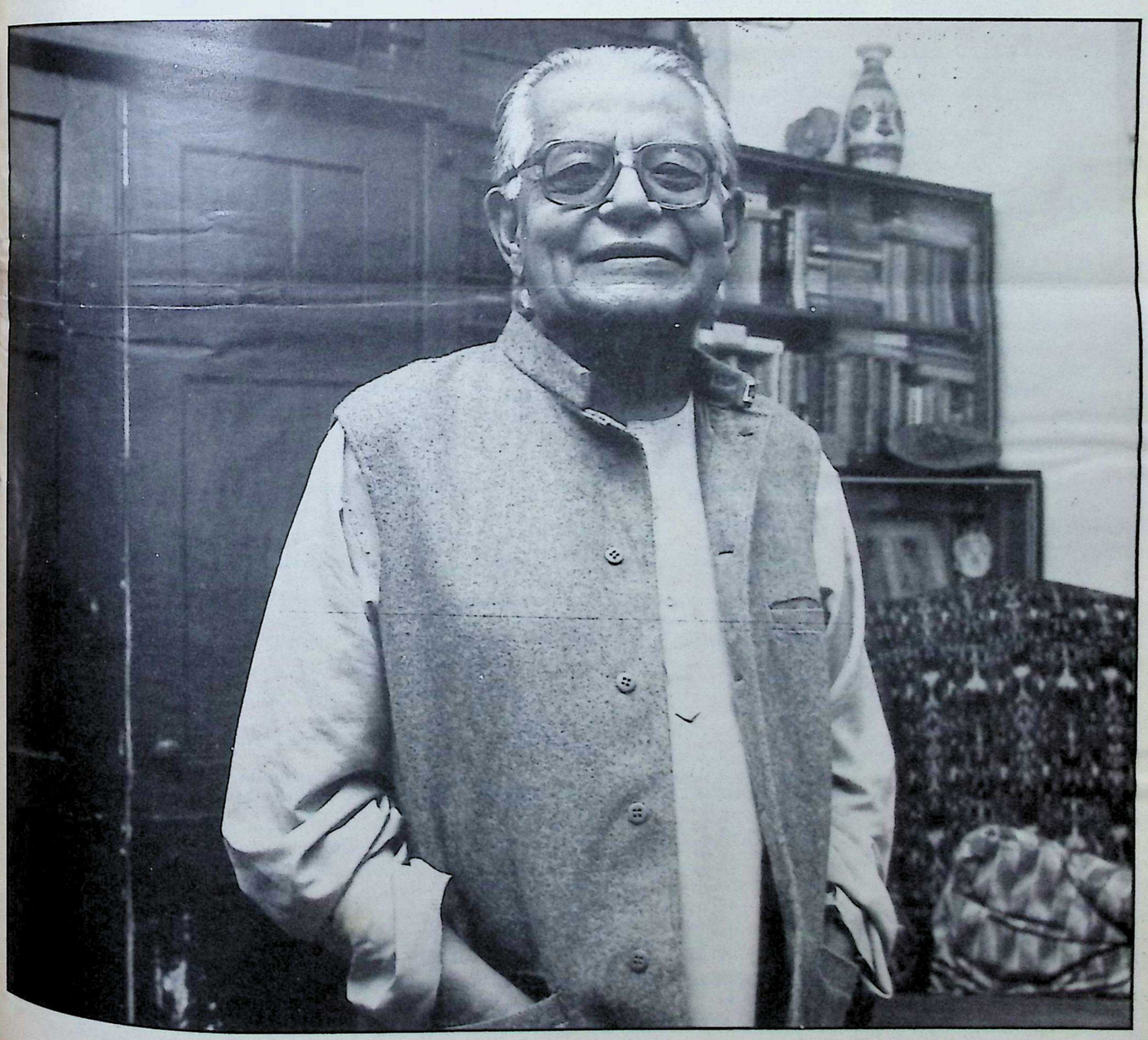

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Nikhil Chakravartty

(1913–1998)

मा कुरू धन जन यौवन गर्व। हरति निमेषात्काल: सर्वम।।

(Do not pride yourself on (the possession of) fortune, kinsmen or youth. For, Time is a great leveller who takes away everything in a moment.)

Nikhil Chakravartty, Dada of *Mainstream*, passed away on 27 June and the truth of the lines from the *Bhaja Govindam* quoted above hits one hard again. Though he was often wont to declare that every year after seventy is a bonus in a lifetime, one could not associate death with Nikhilda while he lived, joyously, with involvement in and commitment to things big and small. For every one of us who had the privilege of working with him, of being trained by him, his comfortable, benign presence was a given. We took it for granted that we could tap at will his unlimited fund of stories and anecdotes, and the richstorehouse of grass-roots wisdom that he could effortlessly communicate. And now he is suddenly not there and the void hurts more than words can express.

The obituaries in the national dailies have set forth the details of Nikhil Chakravartty's life at length. Born on 3 November 1913 at Silchar in Assam, the son of a professor of English in Calcutta University, he was a brilliant student who took English Honours with first class from the prestigious Presidency College of Calcutta, and then went to Merton College, Oxford, for further studies. He taught history in Calcutta University from 1939 and met and married Renu Roy, the niece of Dr. B.C. Roy. In 1943, under the guidance of P.C. Joshi, the then general secretary of the Communist Party of India (CPI), he became a card-holder and a correspondent of the CPI weekly *People's War*. He went underground before Independence and was arrested by the British.

Nikhil Chakravartty moved to Delhi in 1952 when his wife got elected to the LokSabha. He worked for *New Age* and launched the *India Press Agency* in 1957 and the weekly *Mainstream* in 1962. He created a special niche for himself by his fearless expression of views against the Emergency. He published a booklet entitled *Maruti to Mafia* during this time which caught the public imagination. In 1978, he left the CPI but remained a strong advocate of Left unity.

In 1983, he became the founder Chairman of NAMEDIA and president of the Editor's Guild. He was appointed Chairman of the Prasar Bharati Board after the Act to pave way for the autonomy of Doordarshan and All India Radio came into being. As a member of the Press Council and the Press Commission, he became wholly involved in the trials and tribulations of journalists in the small towns of India and forgotten areas like the North East.

Behind these bald statements was the man—Nikhil, Nikhilda, Mr. Chakravartty, who commanded the respect of even those whom he criticized and the adoring hero-worship of all his junior colleagues and the staff who worked for him. As one gazed down upon the serene face set in death and his big eyes closed forever, one remembered the way they would soften—in affection, as they looked upon a child, or in compassion, as he heard or recounted a tale of woes of the downtrodden; and twinkle while poking gently malicious fun at the high and the mighty.

This humaneness and compassion were at the core of Nikhilda's personality. Wholly un-worldly about money matters, no one who went to him for help financially was ever turned away. Pungently critical though he invariably was about the ills that affect our society and polity, it was his approach of amused tolerance for human foibles which raised his incisive political commentaries on the contemporary political scene above the ordinary.

For us at *The Book Review*, Nikhil Chakravartty cannot be remembered as anything less than a patron-saint. He was there with Chitra Narayanan at the time of the founding of the journal in 1976 and was a contributor to the first issue. Then, just two years later, when the journal faced extinction because all the three founding editors found themselves living away from Delhi, it was he who stepped in and offered to run *The Book Review*, till such time as we were able to reclaim it. And run it he did for eleven long years at no small financial cost as literary journals like ours seldom mint money. It was on his advice that The Book Review Literary Trust was established in 1989. However even after handing back his charge, he not only continued on the advisory board of *The Book Review* and often wrote for the journal but continued to lend us the support of his staff when necessary. And in a magnanimous gesture he included *The Book Review* among others when distributing the prize-money from his B.D. Goenka award.

To our everlasting regret, Nikhilda refused till the last, despite repeated entreaties, to allow us to record his memoirs, and a storehouse of experience, knowledge and wisdom has died with him. Perhaps this reluctance sprang from his belief that just because a journalist is used to writing on everything under the sun did not mean that he or she can produce a book. "For a newsman producing a report on any happening is not the same thing as producing a book on the subject. The professional hazards of one are different from those of the other,", he wrote in an article entitled 'The Scribe as Muse' for *The Book Review* recently.

On behalf of my co-trustees, Uma Iyengar and Chitra Narayanan, and the members of the *TBR* advisory board, I end this with salutations to Nikhilda—fearless, compassionate and kind, generous teacher, loving father, doting grandfather, good friend and unequivocal critic of wrong doing—whose extraordinary values in life will serve as a beacon for the innumerable lives which touched his own. Above all he leaves behind him the memory of his abiding, unwavering faith in the people of India. He was one of his kind, as his tribute to the people of India after the ending of the Emergency giving them the sole credit for putting democracy back on its rails made abundantly clear.

C.C.

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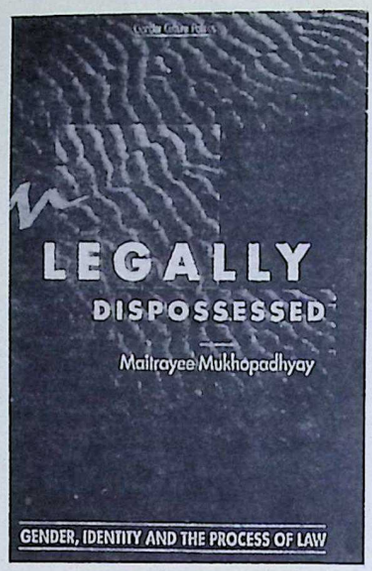
A Nuanced Analysis

Ratna Kapur

LEGALLY DISPOSSESSED: GENDER, IDENTITY AND THE PROCESS OF LAW

By Maitrayee Mukhopadhyay

Stree, Calcutta, 1998, pp. 258, Rs. 180.00



Maitrayee Mukhopadhyay's book, *Legally Dispossessed: Gender Identity and the Process of Law*, represents an important work in new scholarship on feminist legal studies emerging in India as well as a provocative book in our current phase of Right wing politics. The thrust of her concern is with the personal laws specifically of the Hindu and Muslim communities and women's experiences in resorting to litigation to access or enforce their rights, particularly in the arena of marriage and inheritance. The author tellingly brings out the complexity of terms such as democracy and secularism, which can no longer be regarded as universalisms that are enjoyed equally by all. Her work is developed from the subject position of the female litigant, who does not exist *a priori* to gender, class, caste, religion and community, but rather is structured by and through these multiple identities. Mukhopadhyay's research is conducted through an ethnographic lens that involves interviews with women litigants. She develops a complex notion of the subject and how women themselves try to negotiate their multiple identities when engaging with the law.

The main focus of Mukhopadhyay's work is on women's experiences of litigation under personal laws. Her interviews reveal how difficult it is to disentangle women's identity as a subject-citizen who is imbued with rights from her identity as mother, wife, sister and widow in the family. It is in part the failure to address the multiplicity of the subject that resulted in the conflation of feminist demands for a Uniform Civil Code with those of the Hindu communal Right.

Mukhopadhyay's work represents an important shift as it focuses on litigation rather than law reform and legal text. She examines the nature of disputes, the attitudes of lawyers, the experience in court, and the logic of judgements to try and arrive at a more complex and enabling analysis of "what is at stake in feminist and other struggles around citizenship today" (p.6). There is a need for such complex analysis in order to ensure that litigation strategies are also rendered more complicated. The resort to litigation has been fraught with hazards and difficulties for feminists and women litigants, as the stories related by the author reveal. Litigants are dependent upon lawyers and judges who determine how issues are put across, prioritized and decided.

The introduction sets out the parameters of her work and analysis. She discusses the historical genealogy of the personal laws of the Hindu and Muslim communities during the British period and how both norms were ostensibly 'discovered' or excavated and came to be regarded as law. She also reviews the work of Lata Mani and to a lesser extent Partha Chatterjee, to examine how women's identity came to be the ground on which tradition was reformulated as well as deployed by the nationalist project to oppose colonial rule.

The author argues that until such time as India is ready to enact the directive principle of the Constitution whereby the state is obliged to enact a Uniform Civil Code, which will consolidate the laws of all the communities, the personal laws are being "temporarily harboured" under the overarching secular law. She argues that personal laws have served as a terrain for debates and contests around religious identity. The Hindu political Right has used the existence of personal laws as a way to argue that the state is violating the Constitution by not enacting the same laws for all its citizens. The minority community in turn maintains that personal laws serve as the only legal protection that they have as minorities in India and that it is the role of the state to serve as a guarantor of the distinctive and separate identities of the minority community.

Religious identity comes to be represented as a political identity the state is compelled to negotiate. And identity becomes an issue when it comes into crisis as exemplified in the Shah Bano case. Identity, in this instance religious identity, came to acquire a meaning through the process of mobilization that took place at a moment of crisis. The decision was rendered at a time when the secular contract of the 1950's and 1960's had broken down. And it set up gender identity in opposition to the religious identity of Shah Bano. The decision also came at a time when the demand for a Uniform Civil Code was intensified during the rise of Hindu majority communalism. The decision thus represented to some Muslims a violation of the Muslim personal law and their authentic identity. The representation of the Muslim personal law as authentic tradition had the effect of mobilizing the community, invisibilizing Shah Bano's gender identity, as well as to mobilize the state. Shah Bano publicly denounced the decision and the state enacted the *Protection of Muslim Women Women's Rights on Divorce Act*, in 1986.

Mukhopadhyay is primarily concerned with the way in which the feminist project for women's equality was so easily appropriated by both patriarchal and communal interests. This concern stimulates her interrogation into the gender analysis informing the feminist project. She argues that a neutralized subject structured in the dominant culture, informs both Marxist and feminist politics as well the prevailing understanding of rights, democracy, and secularism. And it is this concern that brings the author to an engagement with law and its purported neutrality in relation to caste, class, religion and community, and its hidden ideology. She proceeds to examine the "hidden structuring of the neutral-subject citizen, the processes of 'norming', the exclusions this results in and how this serves to secure asymmetrical relations between genders and extend patriarchal power" (p. 28). Her specific task is to examine litigation brought by women in the area of maintenance and property rights and ask: "(a) how the private domain of social relations is connected to the public domain of the politico-jural, the state; (b) which social relations are being taken for granted, 'normed' and invisibilized through this connection; and (c) how patriarchal power is created through the process of adjudication" (*ibid*).

The first part of the book is based on ethnographic research wherein the author examines the struggles for family property that Hindu and Muslim wives, sisters, daughters and widows wage in court, the outcome of these struggles and the basis on which entitlements are granted and fixed. For example, in the context of Hindu marriage and maintenance laws, her findings reveal how the rhetoric of equality has obscured rather than revealed the fact that most awards are made on the assumption of women's economic dependence. Husbands and wives are constituted differently with different rights. As she states, "[W]omen as wives do not fit the legal definition of 'subject' in relation to 'objects' (property) because their relationship to property is mediated by their subordinate position in the conjugal relationship giving them little access to and control over resources (at 76)."

Another example is Muslim women's rights to maintenance, where Mukhopadhyay's research identifies a shift after the Shah Bano case in the way in which Muslim identity comes to be constituted in the 1980's and 1990's during the rise of the Hindu political Right. She discusses how the debates around Shah Bano contributed to the constitution of a new Muslim tradition, which was posited as retrogressive and obscurantist as well as oppressive to women. This re-constitution marked a radical departure from earlier conceptions of the Muslim tradition as being just, woman-friendly, even though it

The Hindu political Right has used the existence of personal laws as a way to argue that the state is violating the Constitution by not enacting the same laws for all its citizens. The minority community in turn maintains that personal laws serve as the only legal protection that they have as minorities in India and that it is the role of the state to serve as a guarantor of the distinctive and separate identities of the minority community.

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was religion bound. Her ethnographic research reveals how this new understanding of Muslim tradition has informed the amounts awarded by the courts to divorced women and the underlying justifications in making these awards. Hindu judges are continuously remarking on the instability of the Muslim marriage which 'does not prohibit polygamy and allows Muslim men to unilaterally divorce wives by pronouncing talak'. The Muslim male and what is regarded as the Islamic religion and culture, come to be simultaneously demonized. And the Hindu judge becomes implicated in ostensibly carrying on the 'civilizing' mission that parallels the self appointed role of the colonial power in the nineteenth century. Invisibilized in this entire process is the need to redefine women's property right in marriage.

The chapters on rights to inheritance as well as the Hindu widow and property, also expose the relationship of dependency constructed in and through law and the responses of judges. In particular, the Hindu widow's rights to property cannot be seen outside both the relationship of dependency as well as the cultural meaning accorded to widowhood, which constrains women from exercising the secular rights granted by the state.

In the second part of the book, Mukhopadhyay sets out the relationship of women to the state and examines the primary discourse of citizenship that frames the relationship. She argues that women are implicated in the state's project of modernization, progress and development. She explores the relationship between women and the state through the experiences of the contemporary women's movement and how the process of cultural constructions of the nation informs this relationship. The weakening of state controls over the economy and the closer alliance emerging between the state and the dominant classes, has made it more difficult for the state to maintain its alliance with the subaltern classes. To prevent a crisis of legitimacy in the wake of this breakdown the 'nation' has to be 'imagined' anew, and the identities of both 'state and 'citizen' redefined. New forms of Indianness, which act as cement in the process of reworking this alliance, are being forged.

In chapter six, the author analyzes the demand for a Uniform Civil Code as a signifier of national unity. She traces the history of the demand for such a code in 1940, and explores the multiple meanings that the UCC acquired. She argues that the UCC represented "both a site of desire and a threat". It was a site of the desire for unity of nation and homogeneity of legal citizenship, promising to resolve the conflicting claims on the subject of nation-state and religious community. At the same time, it was a threat to the very identity and particularity of minorities. As the debates continued in post-independence India, the UCC became a "strategy for delineating the identity of majority and minority communities". Mukhopadhyay then turns to the debates around the UCC in the 1980's, the crisis in secularism and the escalation of communal conflicts during this time. She explores at some length the position of the BJP on the UCC, and the extent to which this position is related to their effort at assimilating the minorities. She further examines how feminists found themselves sharing the same platform as the Right in their position on the UCC and the implications of this for gender equality. She argues that feminists cannot assume that democracy and secularism will provide the structural guarantees for achieving gender equality. Her research indicates that these concepts together with the rights of the individual and citizenship acquire meaning in and through social relations, ideology and historical processes. She argues that feminist politics and theory must move out of an epistemology that "maps gender identity on to the model of the humanist subject or citizen-subject to making visible the processes of norming from the point of view of those who are excluded" (p. 221).

Mukhopadhyay's book contributes to an increasingly complex and nuanced analysis of the role of law in women's oppression and its potential role in challenging that oppression. Her contextual analysis of the female litigant in the context of property, inheritance, and maintenance disputes, reveals the complex location of the subject. Her research demonstrates how caste, class, gender and religious identities, mediate women's access to their rights, reinforces dominant constructions of women, and constructs the religious identity of both the minority and majority communities. She argues in favour of local and context specific initiatives, which deploy democracy and secularism as critical tools rather than as structural guarantees and expose the hidden structuring of the normative gender-neutral subject in law. Mukhopadhyay's book is not only a significant contribution to feminist legal studies, but will also be useful to sociologists, women studies departments, and political theorists.

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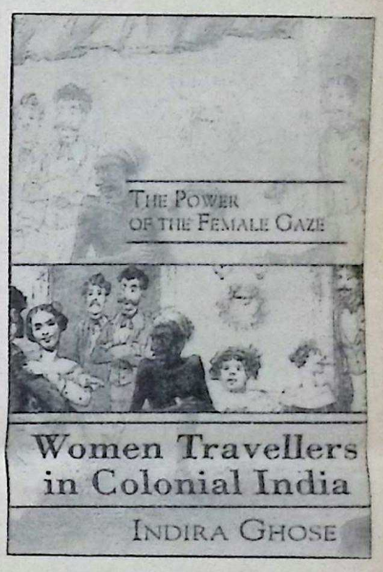
Is There A Female Gaze?

Shampa Roy

WOMEN TRAVELLERS IN COLONIAL INDIA: THE POWER OF THE FEMALE GAZE

By Indira Ghose

Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1998, pp. 196, Rs. 350.00



In one of Satyajit Ray's films *Agantuk*, the protagonist, an old man committed to a life of homeless, rootless travelling, stresses the importance of such constant mobility and the 'education' it entails, which is, according to him far superior to any formal method of teaching. He warns his young nephew, "Remember, if you do not step out of your limited confines and travel, you will become a *'kupamunduk'* (a frog in a well)". Such aestheticization of travel, such an understanding of it simply as edifying and civilizing in its unproblematic influence, an universal, apolitical act, erases the ways in which the act and motives of travel and the encounters it produces are, and have been inflected with social and political ideologies. Travel and the culture of travel for instance have played crucial roles in Europe's expansionist trajectory.

Following in the footsteps of Mary Louise Pratt's important book *Imperial Eyes* which rejects an apolitical understanding of travel and defines European travel literature in terms of the imperial metropolis' "need to present and represent its peripheries and its others continually to itself"[1], Indira Ghose's study focuses on the ideological negotiations within a specific kind of 19th century English travel literature—those produced by upper and middle class Englishwomen travelling in colonial India.

A study of Victorian women's writings on travels in India is potentially an examination of the complexly imbricated ideologies of race, nation and above all gender, for travel, with its connotations of adventure, exploration and expansion had been, since the beginning of the 18th century central to the subject formation of the white aristocratic English male. The study of women's travel writings has become, however, a fairly over-inscribed area of research over the past few years. Yet given the wide range of writings Ghose has brought together in her book, one begins it with the hope that it will have fresh insights on the subject.

Using a post-modernist theoretical framework, Ghose's work promises to "reinstate" women as agents of their own history. "Unfortunately," says Ghose in her introduction, research on women travellers remains largely uncontaminated by post-structuralist theory." And as if to leave no doubt in the readers' minds about the thorough "contamination" of her own work by post-structuralist theory she quotes profusely from various post-structuralist critics and chants the oft-heard post-modernist *mantra* about plural, unstable identities, multiplicity and non-essence within historical contexts that can only be narrated but never recorded. "As various critics have made clear, it is in the best interests of feminism to align itself with post-structuralism and relinquish cherished notions of female essence." While indeed feminism benefits by associating with post-structuralist thought which reconceptualizes subjectivity and provides powerful critique of political interests sheltered within western metaphysics, its exclusive celebration of a pluralist paradigm ultimately proves

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damaging for feminism's political agenda. Therefore, even as one fully agrees with Ghose that there is no female essence, no essentially female gaze and that woman is a socially constructed category, one wishes for a greater clarification and explanation of her statements about "women's agency" and "women's radical assertion of a female identity." Is she then suggesting, quite contrary to her post-structuralist assumptions that there is an area of non-discursive experience—lived reality—from which women draw their agency, their radical female identity? Or can the concept of agency be retained without returning to naive concepts of lived experience outside ideology? For instance by seeing it as a counter-hegemonic discourse, the enabling conditions for which are the contradictions produced by exploitative and oppressive social relations under patriarchal capitalism? Whatever it is, Ghose needs to recognize and address this problem.

She must however be lauded for asserting that though interested in retrieving women's voices, she does not wish to fetishize gender at the cost of other factors, nor occlude the possibility of women's active participation in the oppressive colonial, racial structures.

Of the seven chapters into which the book is divided, four explore different women travellers' responses to those aspects of India that popularly gripped the colonial imagination—orientalist learning, the zenana, the exotic India landscape and the Mutiny—while two focus specifically on two particular women travellers' experiences and writings, the discursive mode of one (Emily Eden) and the purportedly apolitical altruism of another (Mary Carpenter). However, the assignation of separate chapters to these different themes and an exclusive focus on the ideologies which seem to have shaped the responses to them, has its disadvantages. It disallows, for instance, the possibility of reading in terms of historical formations within which different and sometimes contradictory ideologies crisscross with each other as they complexly shape the processes of meaning making. Thus, the discourse of ethnography that is invoked while examining Fanny Parks' gaze on the Indian landscape, is forgotten when her gaze on the zenana women is discussed. Nor is there any discussion of how a similar historical context could have produced such dissimilar voices as Emily Eden's ironic one that sees Indians as potentially resistant and Mary Carpenter's earnestly preachy one that sees them only as so many unenlightened creatures awaiting reform.

The chapters are packed with well-researched information though some important questions remain unaddressed, some issues remain unexplored.

In the chapter titled "In Search of the Picturesque" for instance, Ghose does not give any historical evidence or explanation for her statement about the Picturesque being, from its inception, "a practice culturally coded male." She also asserts, "the aestheticizing stance displayed in the texts of the picturesque is symptomatic both of women's marginalized position in British India as well as of women's self-image as spectators of empire." Such an analysis omits to point out however that the conventions of aesthetic principally based on Burke's *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* made feminine beauty synonymous with fairness and softness, qualities which only an idle life confined within the domestic sphere could produce. It also played an important role in class/gender formation for working class women with their long hard hours of outdoor labour could hardly aspire to meet these standards of feminine beauty.

Women like Fanny Parks who chose with such enthusiasm a life of constant outdoor travel (especially Parks who in her enthusiasm often abandoned her husband saying it was her duty to herself to leave him and travel about) were, even as they assessed the beauty of India's landscape by given conventions themselves choosing to risk its loss by those same standards.

However they also replicate the oppressive structures of class and race by completely excluding from their beauty-searching gaze the several figures of women labourers on fields and farms they are bound to have seen, and choosing instead to train it on the zenana-bound women.

In the chapter devoted to an examination of the Englishwomen's gaze on the zenana women, Ghose divides the former into three categories—erotic, compassionate and conservative. Of these three the last two are historicized in terms of the post-Mutiny waning of the evangelical/utilitarian reformatory zeal and the subsequent taking on of this reform work by the growing British feminist movement which constructed the women of the colonies as passive victims of barbaric practices to bolster their self-image and create work opportunities for themselves in those areas. But the gaze of the early 19th century women travellers that saw zenana women as sensual and languorous is essentialized and read in trans-historical terms as synonymous with the orientalist gaze of western

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writers and painters across histories and cultures (Thomas Dallan in 1598 gazing at the Turkish Sultan's concubines, the painter Thomas Daniell's 'Zenana Scene' in 1804, Lady Montagu's *Letters from Turkey* in 1763) which have reductively sexualized the eastern woman. The feminist theory of female spectatorship of Hollywood images of the sensual woman that Ghose uses to read the erotic gaze is hardly adequate for understanding the historical specificities within which the stereotype operated in the Indian context and the ideological alibi it served alongside, for instance, that other powerful early 19th century western stereotype of the Indian woman—the oppressed though remarkably virtuous 'suttee'.

In the chapter on Mutiny writings Ghose declares her intention to focus on not the iconized figures of the Mutiny like Miss Wheeler but the accounts of "real women whose husbands were murdered and who were forced to endure sieges." She notes that the narrative persona constructed in these writings is "active in self-survival rather than a victim waiting to be sacrificed. By constructing a resourceful and independent female subject they pose a threat to the colonial image of the woman as a passive victim." This is an insightful reading which Ghose acknowledges having borrowed from Jenny Sharpe. However one also needs to remember that by the mid-19th century one of the ways in which the crisis of subjectivity produced by the emergence of the New Woman was sought to be contained by the hegemonic culture was, by producing a revised version of the New Englishwoman by grafting ideas of imperial destiny and race and class superiority on to traditional views of English motherhood. The 'true' New Woman was thus represented as self-disciplined, resilient, with remarkable capacity for endurance of hardship and physical suffering, and therefore a fit woman and mother for the empire, her new, widened domestic sphere.

However, the account of Mrs Duberley's experiences in the Mutiny well analysed by Ghose indicates yet another way in which such an account was capable of opening up a gap in the contemporary hegemonic representation of the Mutiny which racialized it as Indian barbarity and violence thus masking its political connotations. Mrs Duberley's gaze sensitive to the suffering of several Indians during the Mutiny interrupts this representation by drawing attention to British atrocities.

In the concluding chapter Ghose poses the vital question, "Do women travellers perceive India differently than male travellers? Is there, in fact, a female gaze?" Her post-structuralist fear of essentializing makes her answer that since subjectivities are fractured and unstable there can be no essential female gaze just as there is no essential India or Indian to be gazed at. A celebration of multiplicity and difference is useful to the extent that it makes the category of 'real' not given or unalterable. But it does not make visible the structural links between such differences and larger social, political and economic arrangements that determine the distribution of resources, division of labour and power with a particular historical formation.

We therefore need a critical framework that, while using post-structuralist insights, does not shrink from acknowledging the systematic operation of social totalities like patriarchy and racism. There are, inspite of similarities, crucial differences between Macaulay's rhetoric on India and Emily Eden's letters on the same subject though both travelled the country in the 1830s. This indicates that they were interpellated differently as subjects through colonial discourses and were negotiating them in somewhat different ways. This book would have benefited by the inclusion of examples of the colonial male gaze for a comparison would have helped in a fuller understanding of the complex processes of the women's negotiations and resistance at work.

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Kaleidoscopic Glimpses

N. Subba Reddy

TRIBAL COHESION

By Urmila Pingle and Christof Von Furer-Haimendorf

Booklinks Corporation, Hyderabad, 1998, pp. 171, Rs. 200.00

Furer-Haimendorf's pioneering achievements in the realm of Indian Anthropology are legendary. His sustained field studies spread over five decades in the central and eastern regions of India, as well as in parts of Nepal, resulted in well known monographs on the Chenchus, Konda Reddis, Raj Gonds and the Konyak Nagas. Besides being a researcher, he also served as a special administrator for the tribal areas under the erstwhile Nizam State in the early forties during which years he rendered yeoman services to the aboriginals by assigning to them thousands of acres of land. While, in the later years, he was professionally anchored at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London, he made use of his vacations and sabbaticals for his annual pilgrimage to some of the areas he had studied earlier in Andhra Pradesh or Arunachal Pradesh, right until he was physically disabled and breathed his last in 1995.

During his visits and revisits to his old haunts, Haimendorf kept meticulous notes on the changes that took place in the subsequent years, particularly as a result of the incursions of commercial and political elements into the tribal areas leading to continuous usurpation of tribal lands by the non-tribals. Compiling these notes he brought out a subsequent volume entitled *Tribes of India: Struggle for Survival* (published by Oxford University Press in 1983). His annual visits continued even in the late eighties and early nineties and he went on recording the changing scenario among the communities he had studied earlier. Urmila Pingle who holds a degree in medicine besides a doctorate in population genetics, earlier collaborated with Haimendorf in writing a booklet, *Gonds and their Neighbours: A Study in Genetic Diversity*. During the later phase of Haimendorf's life, she was his companion in the field trips and eventually become the custodian of the information collected and impressions recorded. Urmila Pingle has put them together in the present volume after the death of Haimendorf.

The intent of the authors is not to present holistic vignettes of particular tribes but to offer 'kaleidoscopic' glimpses of the 'symbiotic' relations between neighbouring tribes in the form of economic relations, social exchanges and shared religious beliefs and rituals, besides a few comparisons and contrasts in the life situations of some of the communities. Striking indeed is the way certain unique features of a dominant tribe come to be taken over by other tribes. Also noteworthy is the fact that major communities of a region come to subscribe to the cults of smaller groups recognized as original settlers of the land and hence having a special rapport with the local deities.

The Raj Gonds have a complex system of descent groups organized at the first level into clans, each bearing a particular name, which are regrouped at the second level into four phratries. Each phratry derives its nomenclature from the number of ancestral deities believed to be associated with it. Thus their designations run from four-deity phratry to seven-deity phratry. This unique system of phratry divisions along with the nomenclature has been adopted not only by Pardhans who are the traditional bards and Raj Gonds but by other tribes such as Koyas, Kolams, Mannes etc.

In the tract between the Godavari and Penganga rivers, where Koyas, Mannes and Naikpods live in close proximity, the former two tribes have this kind of descent organization, while the Naikpods, who consider themselves superior to other tribes by virtue of their abstinence from pork and beef, have descent groups similar in their structure and nomenclature to those of the Telugu castes. But a section of the Naikpods living in the close proximity of Raj Gonds in Rajura Taluk have adopted the four-phratry system.

The populous tribe of Koyas is served by a class of functionaries known as Kololu, who too have clans similar to those found among the former. An individual functionary with the same clan name as his patrons performs the marriage and funeral ceremonies for the latter. The Koyas together with Mannes are served by another community of bards known as Totis. They narrate stories from *Mahabharata*, sometimes tracing the descent of Koyas and Mannes from the key characters in the epic.

In the tracts where the Koyas and Konda Reddis live in close proximity, there are mututally benificial economic exchanges between then. The Konda Reddis exchange the baskets they make for the iron implements forged by some of the Koya specialists. The food-gathering Chenchus barter their forest produce for a few head of cattle from pastoralists like the Banjaras and Kurmas.

The Hill Gonds of Bastar carry the images of their clan gods, once in a few years, over long distances to certain sacred sites in the territory of Koyas to be worshipped by the latter. Where the habitations of the Raj gonds and Kolams (a numerically small tribe) are interspersed, the latter act as village priests as they are recognized as the original settlers of the land, and the former pay obeisance at their shrines. Most of the tribal groups along the Godavari river consider Bhimana the most important mythical hero, the guardian of nature and their protecter. The Kolams, Koyas, Mannes and Konda Reddis share the wide-spread myth of Bhimana and Hidimbi as their ancestral figures.

In the previous works of Haimendorf, one finds a picture of the idyllic life of the unspoilt tribals before they became exposed to the rapacious traders and harrasing forest officials. In this book too, there are contrasting sketches of the peace and repose among the tribals left to their own ways on the one hand, and the stresses and strains that follow when once they are subjected to a new set of restrictive laws or the inroads of commercial and political forces of the other. An account of the tribals in Bastar, Madhya Pradesh is illustrative of the harmonious and peaceful life led by a tribal community carrying on shifting cultivation in its traditional way in which plots of land are equitably allotted among the families and crops are treated as results of the collective efforts of the village, with the old and the sick automatically getting a share in the produce. The narrative may better be read in the very words of the authors.

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"The Abhujhmar Hills (in Bastar) are a geologically and culturally homogeneous area covered by dense deciduous forest. There was no sign of pressure on land, a consequence of low population density and an undisturbed traditional cultivation, consisting of a long fallow period of 12–14 years necessary for maintaining the ecological equilibrium of this hill region. The Hill Maria villages are small, consisting of less than 20 households generally belonging to the same clan. The village is the basic economic unit of shifting cultivators, all the villages collectively participating in sowing, threshing and protection of crops. The only activity that is done individually is the clearing and cutting of the podu fields. Each man can cut and clear two hectares of land with his wife and children helping in the ligher work. This much land is sufficient to sustain a family for a whole year, and in a good season may yield surplus. We came across a few households who had stock of grains left over from the previous year" (p. 66).

Explaining that the independence of the hill tribes was ensured in Bastar by the protectionist policies of the day, the authors refer to the contrasting conditions encountered across the border in Maharashtra.

"However due to differential state policies, artificial boundaries are being created in a culturally homogeneous and harmonious population, disturbing and perplexing these simple people. In 1981, when we revisited the villages in Maharashtra State, we found the nearest hill villages were now connected by a motorable road. The road was laid by the paper mill contractors who had succeeded in obtaining a lease for the exploitation of bamboo on the hills, the only region still retaining a natural bamboo forest in Maharashtra. With the approach of the forest contractors into the hills, the forest department simultaneously banned the Marias from carrying out their shifting cultivation. The Marias were complaining bitterly of harrassment by petty forest officials and the heavy fines they were subjected to, preventing them from cultivating in their traditional way. The people of Binakonda, the first accessible hill village, had already been stopped from carrying out shifting cultivation, and the families were subsisting on government doles..... Meanwhile the forest department was planning to lay a net-

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work of roads connecting all the 13 hill villages to facilitate full exloitation of the bamboo by paper mill contractors. With this act, the final blow would be dealt by commercial interests to both the forest and the aboriginal people who had co-existed over a millenium" (p. 67).

The situation has continuously changed for the worse in the recent years. Population pressure on the one hand and mindless expansion of the reserve forest boundary on the other have led to a drastic dimunition in the extent of land available for tillage. This has necessitated a shortening of the cultivation cycle and land to soil erosion. In the face of this stark reality which cannot be wished away is there a remedy on which there is a general agreement? Here is the dilemma and it becomes fully reflected in the last chapter of the book. The remedial action launched by a leading local landholder belonging to a dominant caste and a forward-looking administrator in Adilabad and Srikakulam districts was the propagation of horticulture in the form of mango and cashew orchards in the fields hitherto under shifting cultivation.

The benifits of the experiment are noted with appreciation towards the end of the book. "The income from the mango crop in 1990 ranged from Rs. 1000 to Rs.4000. per acre. . . This is a huge sum of money for a people previously living at a subsistence level" (p. 160). It is a moot question whether all the 800 acres reported to have been brought under mango orchards are in fact under the management of the tribals or they only represent the lands legally owned by the tribals but leased out to non-tribals on nominal rent (or in lieu of interest on debts). While further studies may be necessary to answer this question, the view expressed above does constitute a clear refutation of an earlier observation that the Maria Gonds of Bastar who stuck to millet cultivation are better off than the Raj Gonds of Adilabad District who adopted cash crops like cotton (p. 152). Here is a switch from one kind of faith to another as it were. Does it mean that the 'no-change' stance of older anthropology has been unobtrusively replaced by the 'pro-change' stance of new anthropology, or is it a case of the view of the younger collaborator silently nudging aside the view of the older one. The book under review does raise that debate.

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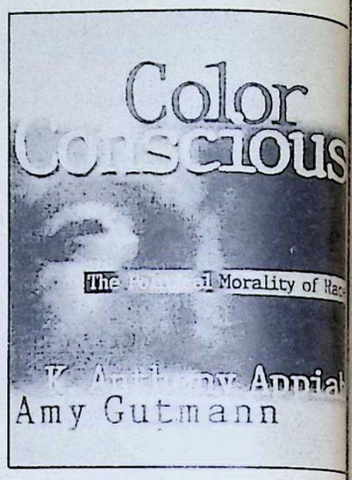
Race and the Politics of Recognition

Shelley Walia

COLOUR CONSCIOUS: THE POLITICAL MORALITY DEBATE

By K. Anthony Appiah and Amy Gutmann

Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1997, pp. 191,$ 21.95



The bitterness of the contemporary debate over such racially charged issues as affirmative action programme, multiculturalism, welfare reforms, and crime in the United States has provoked a rather loud response from mainly two schools: the "colour blind" and the "affirmative action". Both aim at racial justice, and the general nature and implications of liberalism in a nation which till today is faced by its most troublesome problem of discrimination.

Race is a social category that has evolved through the motivation of explaining differences between groups by mistakenly attributing various "essences" to them. Anthony Appiah and Amy Gutmann in *Colour Conscious* take broadly two views on those intricate issues of race, culture, and identity that confound us all. Appiah argues that "while people of colour may still need to gather together, in the face of racism, under the banner of race, they need also to balance carefully the calls of race against the many other dimensions of individual identity". He tries to bring about some reconciliation between the John Rawls school of individual liberty and the "communitarian critics" who lay emphasis on the idea of racial identity. This makes the problem of toleration more troublesome and raises the question of the "extent to which any society can be morally and culturally pluralistic"

Amy Gutmann, on the other hand, maintains that the American society is not colour blind and, therefore, social justice can be achieved only through fairness and not though the principle of colour blindness. It cannot be denied that people and institutions mete out treatment to individuals according to their colour. Though their stands differ, both the writers are committed to a constitutional democracy where policies of colour and class consciousness will depend on an open-ended assessment" of their fairness and their capacity to move us clearly to a society with liberty and justice for all."

Since the first arrival of the pilgrims, it has been the strategy of the white race to consciously follow the principle of colour blindness with the emphasis on individual rights, freedom and identity. But this has been a camouflage for exclusion and dominance of the non-white races. Colour blindness they feel has always been synonymous with colour consciousness, the most American of problems.

Though modern liberalism is generally accepted by both the conservative Republicans and the liberal Democrats, how far the government is sincere in implementing the fundamental notion that it is there to play a positive role in assuring basic economic welfare is highly questionable. Undoubtedly no one is unopposed to anti-discrimination laws, but still the angry polemics generated in matters of race only indicate the nature of the problem. The government cannot be colour-blind because society isn't. Liberalism is just on paper. The growth of ethnic minorities, the re-emergence of nationalism, the women's movement and other significant social developments have all brought the state and the structure of liberal politics under terribly disintegrating pressures.

It is an undeniable fact of considerable political significance that in the wake of the heated debate on the affirmative action programme in the United States, American conservatives seeking to end positive discrimination are also guilty of siding with the tide of racial communitarianism, and collusion with white supremacists. President Johnson's set of laws and executive orders under the rubric "affirmative action" were framed with the main aim of bestowing certain rights on the marginalized sections of society so as to counter a racist past. And just when this was enabling many to enter higher education, a new wave of anti-affirmative revolt hit the University of California, Berkeley. A signature campaign began with the aim to outlaw any affirmative action plans on the ground that they are unconstitutional and infringe the basic fundamental right of equality. Meritocracy is emphasized against the colour of the skin. The leaders heading this attack work on the rationale that draw on Martin Luther's ideology which emphasized equality and content of merit rather than the ethnic background. Should testing people as individuals take precedence over compensations for the wrongs done in the past? And how can the legitimate claims to recognition by cultural groups be reconciled with the central liberal concern to respect the basic rights of all people whatever their moral or cultural beliefs?

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Contrary to individualist assumptions, cultures and persons define their identity in continuous dialogue with others. We are all social selves. This argument is problematic for the practice and theory of liberalism, challenging most obviously its universalisms

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... it must be acknowledged that America has a dual racial heritage and any racial discourse must take full cognizance of it. Both Appiah and Gutmann have given a balanced and readable account of the race issue with full attention on the promise of American ideals and their persistent failure.

political identity. With the collapse of social hierarchy a reconception and redefinition of notions of identity and authenticity calls for the recognition of equality and respect for the autonomy of individuals and cultural groups. In other words, a non-partisan approach of finding a middle ground between extremes of universalism and individual identity is needed

To evolve an unbiased action plan for the rights of minorities, this paradox of universalism and cultural autonomy must be taken into consideration so that the politics of recognition and difference form the basis of a critical frame that would counter any cultural imperialism that fails to recognize both the marginalized groups and particular identities. One way out of this impasse can be a more accommodating liberalism which cuts down a little on the universalism aspect and gives concessions for the recognition of cultural groups. This has been the dilemma, for instance, of the Indian or the Canadian Government where basic liberties are guaranteed, but along with these rights, the minority ethnic or socially backward groups are given some extra and concessionary rights, such as reservations in jobs or incentives for language promotion.

The concept of universal human rights has been criticized by some who argue that these rights reflect the anti-communitarian, self-centred individualism of the West with a disproportionate focus on individual autonomy. It can instead be posited that communities can exist in modern western societies which protect not only the civil and political rights but the whole spectrum of individual human rights including economic rights. There can be no bifurcation between universal human rights that recognize the equal dignity of all and a differentiation that recognizes the unique identity and authenticity of cultural groups and individuals.

A sense of community is essential in realizing the universality of human rights. In the modern world, for a community to work everyone must be treated equally, enjoy societal respect, and be able to act autonomously in her or his everyday decision-making. This view however challenges the Left which regards universalism as a form of cultural imperialism and refuses to recognize particular identities. Being a universalist, one would favour, like Rousseau, the blind non-discriminatory policies which overlook the importance of recognizing cultural identities, and make it impossible for a polity to allow for differentiation or political identities and goals. This kind of liberalism is obviously as restrictive as a neo-Kantian conception of a polity composed of free and equal citizens possessing universal rights. Contrary to the politics of recognition, Rousseau's liberalism in principally that of fairness and confines itself to procedural values.

It is difficult to set out ideal models that are based wholly on communitarian, self-centred individualism or cultural relativism. Conservative or Leftist communitarian challenges emanating from both the western world and the Third World need to evolve a more accommodating model that emphasizes the idea of social selves enjoying equal respect but dialogically defined so that homogeneity is not the aim of the state.

The views of the Right on racism are, therefore, too simplistic and exceedingly provocative owing to a lack of a historical sense, which is a disabling factor in understanding the brutality and ruthlessness with which white Americans maintained segregation and oppression for over a century. They have completely missed out the tentacular strategies of white violence, the operations of the Ku Klux Klan, the bias of the white judicial system and police intimidation, and geared towards a racial warfare with the sole purpose of showing black inferiority. Many still feel that all slavery was introduced for economic and not racist reasons and that segregation was not motivated by any desire for black oppression.

The growth of such ideas, the complicity of the legal machinery, and the indifference of the federal government towards racist violence have resulted in the demise of the philosophy of nonviolence that once infused agencies like the Congress of Racial Equality. Regrettably, the problem of inadequate schools for black children still persists; overt racism from white teachers is endemic. When race and racial divisions are a major political and social issue, books like *The End of Racism* or *The Bell Curve* (that puts forward the thesis that the blacks have the lowest IQ and shows that this is genetically true) do not, in any way, help the situation. There is inherent immunity in such works to the terrible effects of America's policy on race relations, the segregation not only in federal government agencies critical of the affirmative action programme, but also in residential housing, and education.

Conservatives do not realize that black under achievement or individual inadequacy in education has arisen out of consistent political decisions and entrenched systematic racist ideology. The economics of race and class in America amply indicates that such policies lead to the exclusion of blacks from apprenticeships, thus ensuring that skilled jobs go only to the whites who never face any competition from the unskilled or low-paid blacks. Federal intervention in the politics of race and class can bring about some racial equality as was seen in the period under Lyndon Johnson, but ideological conservatism of recent Reaganism backed by Bush, and now Clinton, has brought about a reduction of any firm commitment to the question of a concerted affirmative action programme. The practice of giving concessionary rights to the marginalized is religiously followed by Harvard University which has a remarkable diversity record among the Ivy League. Though John F. Kennedy, signing the executive order had pointed out that "discrimination because of race, creed, colour or national origin" was unconstitutional, the affirmative action programme was nevertheless introduced, and it is now under attack for being positively discriminatory. Republicans have pledged to abolish it on the ground that institutional racism is dead and that minorities must not exploit history as an excuse. On the other hand blacks are clear in their minds that the US is still not colour blind and that apartheid and its effects cannot be washed away so abruptly. Chang-Lin Tien, the Chancellor of the University of California, Berkeley, along with many academics is of the view that Latinos, Cambodians, Asian Americans all suffer discrimination and that it is only the affirmative action programme that will create an ideal educational atmosphere for all students. For the "playing field to be level" the racist thesis of Richard Hernstein and Charles Murray in their book, *The Bell Curve* (genes are certainly not the answer to group differences) or arguments that blacks score the lowest in SAT will not end centuries of oppression. Socio-economic factors along with the anti-intellectual culture of many minority secondary schools are ignored, in the words of Robert Woodson, by "degrading, dehumanising and damaging" denunciations of affirmative action programmes.

Government efforts to direct or improve the economy, or to introduce taxation policies which involve transfers of income from the affluent to the underprivileged, are noteworthy of liberal or social democratic solutions, though conservatives economists like Thomas Sowell would disagree with this Leftist ideology on the basis of evidence that shows that any employment on ethnic, racial, religious or gender lines is unprofitable and affects competition adversely. Such time-honoured conservative solutions only aim at "strengthening civilising institutions" such as churches and business enterprises. This smacks only of a coded political discourse on race that claims to never lose sight of human rights. No one can deny that racism is out there and the federal government cannot wash its hands off it to appease the "angry white males"

David B. Wilkins, in the introduction to the book under review, maintains that the nation is not only destined to fail to solve the problem of colour-line in this century, but it is "in danger of losing its ability even to talk about the subject intelligently". He goes on to add: "Far too often, speakers on both sides of the contemporary debates about race acknowledge only half of America's complex racial legacy. Those who oppose taking race into account, for example, when awarding benefits or designing educational curricula, point to the fact that our political institutions rest on principles of individual freedom and equality that expressly deny the moral or political significance of ascriptive characteristics such as race. On the other hand the school of multicultural supporters cite the extermination of indigenous Native American population done in the name of individual freedom and equality; for these advocates "colour blindness" is an ideological construct to hide the pervasive colour consciousness that has been a "dominant feature of the American saga" throughout the history of imperialism. It is for this reason Anthony Appiah feels that all that is argued about race matters is "dishonest, confused, ill informed, unhelpful". If any good is to come out of any discussion on this issue it must be acknowledged that America has a dual racial heritage and any racial discourse must take full cognizance of it. Both Appiah and Gutmann have given a balanced and readable account of the race issue with full attention on the promise of American ideals and their persistent failure. In the very provocative and intelligent essay, "Race,

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Culture, Identity: Misunderstood Connections", Appiah argues that race is a important aspect of the formation of identity, but its concept in America fails to explain the continuance of discrimination; nor does it "properly act as a surrogate for culture and identity".

Where there is oppression racial identities will always play a vital role, but if authentic freedom and equality have to be enjoyed "we shall have to move beyond current racial identities". Somewhat different from this view, Gutmann in her essay, "Responding to Racial Injustice", bases her arguments on social evidence which sufficiently indicates the influence of race on life in America. She would like individuals to be treated fairly, and to achieve this it would be important to "enact colour conscious policies". But this does not mean that such policies ignore the principles of equality and colour blindness which must be the basis if all decisions for maintaining fundamental equality of all human beings. Colour conscious policies would come in only where they are "instrumentally valuable" in overcoming any racial injustice.

Though the views of these two accomplished professors are of immense political and moral significance, they are still partial with a number of contradictory impulses that do not in any way suggest a model that can have a workable blend of the politics of recognition and individual liberty, a problem that is not only there in America, but is one of the main political sores in Quebec and in India. Shall we say that finally to side with the moral philosophers who go by untheoretical prudence respectful of individual cases and doubtful of universal prescriptions is not an adequate approach for the political morality of race. And yet for all its limitations, the book is consistently interesting and in many ways unsettlingly challenging to the settled opinions on race matters.

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Human Dilemma of Post—Communist Reconstruction

Santyayani Gupta

THE HAUNTED LAND: FACING EUROPE'S GHOSTS AFTER COMMUNISM

by Tina Rosenberg

Vintage Books, 1996, pp. 438, Rs. 310.00

This is a book with a difference; a sensitive portrayal of the decline and fall of Communism in Eastern Europe without a triumphalist or an apologetic tone. Tina Rosenberg avoids the temptation of seeing Communist collapse in the late 1980s as a win for western liberal democracy and market economics. Nor is her tour de force *The Haunted Land* a nostalgic paean to days of Stalinist totalitarianism, when Moscow held its East European satellites in an iron grip.

Indeed, Rosenberg brings out the human dilemma of post-Communist reconstruction in Eastern Europe by showing how the process is inextricably linked with the Communist past of the region. Guilt and complicity, acquiescence and dissent must necessarily assume shifting definitions in the painful transition from one era to another. And Rosenberg's concern is that the region may invent a new myth about state-sponsored repression under Communism as it grapples with fledgling democratic identities.

In her two-and-half year journey from 1991 onwards, in erstwhile East Germany, Czechoslovakia and Poland, Rosenberg met and spoke to a multitude of persons ranging from Marxist ideologues to statesmen and cynical spies. These meetings are faithfully recounted in her book; and the evocative vignettes which emerge can make every reader understand the harsh realities of life under Communist rule.

There is a touching cameo, for instance, of Czech dissident, Rudolf Zukal, which makes the dividing line between treason and duty appear in shades of the deepest grey. Zukal, a hero of the Prague Spring, an idealist and articulate human rights activist found himself clubbed as an ideological collaborator with the discredited Communist regime, after secret service archives were opened by the democratic government of Vaclav Havel in 1991. Reason: a former college classmate turned secret service agent had elicited information from Zukal, on a foreign acquaintance and had listed Zukal as an informer in secret service records. This leads to Rosenberg's central question, 'who is guilty in societies where almost everyone collaborated with the system in some way'. The book abounds in various other fascinating sketches which only prove the moral contradictions of decommunisation in Eastern Europe. Particularly memorable is an entire chapter of Polish aristocrat-turned Communist dictator General Jaruzelski, who still believes his declaration of martial law in Poland saved the country from Soviet invasion in 1981. From gun-toting border guards in the last days of the Berlin Wall, to freewheeling Charter 77 activists of Czechoslovakia to shadowy informers turned dissidents, the images are sharp and clearly focused, unfolding the tragedy of transition in Eastern Europe with stark precision.

Rosenberg delves deep into the apparatus of Communist dictatorships in an attempt to comprehend the psyche of Communist espionage. Shorn of its chilling glamour, the network is seen for what it was. Real life Karlas were cogs in a routine and vast machinery of apparatchik. Rosenberg's accounts of the encounters with former spymasters often border on the farcical, with the latter emerging as bumbling mandarins, thriving on wrong information and compiling dossiers on perceived enemies with all the ad hoc qualities of red tapism.

This is intelligent reportage at its best, combined with the right element of historical information and analysis. The build-up to watershed events such as the Prague Spring of 1968 and the clamping of martial law in Poland in 1981 are lucidly narrated. And the link between the past and present of the region is always deftly handled and expressed in a refreshingly cant-free style.

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In the ultimate analysis, Rosenberg quietly articulates the need for caution to the advocates of witch-hunting in the new democracies. Communist East Europe was a complex and many layered cornucopia of collaboration from the highest to the lowest. To exorcise the ghosts of the past, ordinary people must acknowledge their role in the forty-year old epoch of Communist repression; and Rosenberg is sceptical about any clinical break with an unpopular past without inventing history to suit the needs of the present.

The Haunted Land is a must read for anyone interested in the continuing saga of Eastern Europe for it sensitises us to the daunting tasks of policy makers in the region.

One wishes the author's scenario had been expanded to the Balkan regimes as well. It would have helped if the regional variations of transition had been focused on in greater detail. However, in this age of sequels and reruns one can always expect a Part Two in the offing to take care of such slips.

Santyayani Gupta is Deputy Accountant General in New Delhi. She contributes regularly to the History journal of Calcutta University.

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Melding Personal Glimpses With Public Issues

A.N.D. Haksar

PROFILES AND LETTERS

By K. Natwar Singh

Sterling Publishers, 1998, pp. 260, Rs. 350.00

MY SOUTH BLOCK YEARS

By J.N. Dixit

UBS Publishers & Distributors, 1998, pp. 485, Rs. 395.00

These two books under review are very different in style and content, yet their authors have much in common. Both have spent most of their working lives as career diplomats. Both achieved exceptional success in this esoteric profession, holding high and important offices at home and aboard. And, after leaving the Indian Foreign Service, both have remained actively involved with international affairs, one as a politician, and the other as a commentator.

This common background gives a similarly informed dimension to the two books. Both authors have had long exposures to the outside world, to global trends and events, and to foreign elites and ideas. The gap of five years separating them in age and service life was short enough for their experience to cover broadly the same kind of people and situations. The positions they held moreover enabled them to gain some of this experience at the highest level.

J.N. Dixit capped his official career by becoming the Foreign Secretary under Narasimha Rao. Natwar Singh left the bureaucracy for politics while a secretary in the External Affairs Ministry under Indira Gandhi, and became Minister of State for Foreign Affairs under Rajiv Gandhi. Both have thus witnessed at close quarters the shaping of India's foreign policy and the personalities involved in that process. Both also held at different times the crucial post of Indian Ambassador to Pakistan. Their mutual interaction cannot be gauged from these books, for neither mentions the other. Nevertheless their views bear juxtaposition because of their commonalities.

Dixit's book is a personal account of his stint of over two years as the Foreign Secretary. Some earlier incumbents of this key office have also published their memoirs, notably S. Dutt, C.S. Jha, Y.D. Gundevia and T.N. Kaul. Though insightful, these were either written later in life or dealt with other aspects also. Dixit's work is more focussed. Written less than three years after he demitted office, it also provides a detailed and systematic analysis of the conduct of Indian foreign policy during the period covered. As such it will be an informative source for students of India's international affairs, as well as officials dealing with them, at least for some time.

Given the country's current preoccupations in the post Pokhran II situation, the views expressed by Dixit well before this event occurred are of topical interest. He writes that towards the end of his tour in Pakistan in 1991, he "was getting more and more convinced that India should shed its ambiguity about acquiring nuclear weapons status." However "Rao remained ambiguous on developing options which we possessed, which was not a judicious stand." As for Pakistan, it had "been assiduously heightening subcontinental tensions to justfy and rationalize its nuclear weapons programme." It had even assured "other South Asian countries that its becoming a nuclear weapons power will provide a security umbrella for them against Indian hegemony."

Dixit's views on Pakistani intentions towards India are plainly put. "Pakistan's policies of fragmenting India are not concentrated in Kashmir alone. Pakistan's intelligence agencies have been actively engaged in encouraging ethno-religious and linguistic fissiparous tendencies in India, stretching from Punjab, through central and south India, right up to the North Eastern states." Comparing Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif, the two Pakistani Prime Ministers he dealt with, he says that the former was more impulsive and aggressive. Nawaz Sharif "was a comparatively patient and covert player of the game of maintaining hostle relations with India." Finally, "Pakistan is a negative factor which adversely affects our regional policies...this is the reality which we cannot, and should not, wish away."

Natwar Singh is more general but no less forthright in his views on Pakistan. "The Pakistani psyche," he writes, "is obsessed with India. Kashmir has been utilized to divert attention from acute domestic problems." He adds that "the 1971 war had left a wound that would take long to heal," but desists from other comment because, "as a former Indian Ambassador to Pakistan I have a lifelong responsibility to avoid becoming irresponsible."

Singh's book is a collection of sketches of ten famous personalities he has known and corresponded with over the years, and features select quotations from their letters to him. Though not strictly speaking a diplomatic memoir, it is close enough to that categorization for two reasons. Firstly, apart from the legendary British writer E.M. Forster whom he first met while a student, Singh came to know the other personages only in the course of his diplomatic career. Secondly, his descriptions of their relations with him are also autobiographical.

Of the celebrities profiled by Singh, the two most interesting for the general reader will doubtless be Indira Gandhi and Zia-ul-Haq. The former was, in the author's words, "my benign patron," a relationship which lasted for nearly twenty years till her death. With the latter, he says he "established a comfortable working relationship," as President Zia knew "he had direct access to Indira Gandhi.

J.N. Dixit capped his official career by becoming the Foreign Secretary under Narasimha Rao. Natwar Singh left the bureaucracy for politics while a secretary in the External Affairs Ministry under Indira Gandhi, and became Minister of State for Foreign Affairs under Rajiv Gandhi. Both have thus witnessed at close quarters the shaping of India's foreign policy and the personalities involved in that process.

It is difficult to imagine two contemporary and neighbouring leaders as dissimilar as Indira Gandhi and Zia-ul-Haq. Yet both were all powerful in their domains, and all wielders of such power exude a similar aura, unless it springs from some ultramundane source. Singh describes it in remarkably similar language in both cases.

Of Indira Gandhi he writes: "Long years with her had taught me that it was unwise to trifle with her will. No one took any liberties with her... She drew a sharp line between the personal and the public, the formal and the informal." And of Zia: "Conversations and discussions between Heads of State and Ambassadors can never be on terms of equality... the line dividing the formal and the informal, the casual and the ceremonial, was clearly drawn by both sides." The formal and the informal however overlap in another remarkable profile, that of the eminent overseas Chinese writer Han Suyin, whose letters to Singh show a warm personal equation with candid comments on policy. In one of them she urges him "to make your government see that the Chinese have no intention of using Pakistan against India. You know that Chou En Lai never envisaged this." In another, "one thing I would suggest is, NOT, for your own sake, always to lump Pakistan with China." Though over fifteen years old, these comments are again of topical interest.

The direction of India-China relations in more recent years is described at length by Dixit. He writes that when Narasimha Rao informed the then Chinese Prime Minister Li Peng about Pakistan's role in Kashmir, the latter's response was impartial. "Neither did he refer to the close relations between China and Pakistan, nor did he adopt the generally pro-Pakistan stance which the Chinese normally did." Dixit opines that "India's relations with China have reached a somewhat inactive plateau," and a constructive policy needs to be continued.

Singh's racy style, melding personal glimpses and public issues with lively anecdotes about famous people, makes for enjoyable reading. Dixit, in his own words, "is not too anecdotal," but his country and issue-specific descriptions are eloquent and absorbing. Both are prolific writers with several books to the credit of each. Hopefully more will follow.

A.N.D. Haksar, a former diplomat, has translated several works from Sanskrit into English, the latest among them Hitopadesa *(Penguin, 1998).*

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Illumining the Shadowy Corridors of International Relations

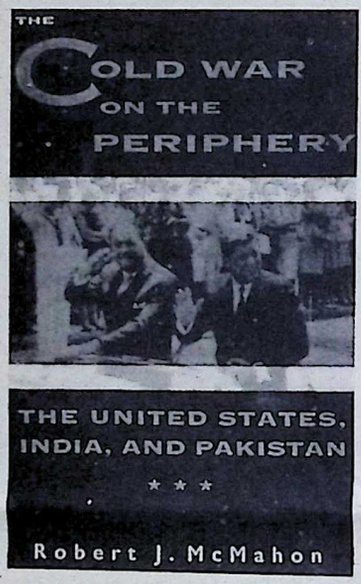
P.R. Chari

THE COLD WAR ON THE PERIPHERY: THE UNITED STATES, INDIA AND PAKISTAN

By Robert J. Mcmahon

Columbia University Press, New York, 1994, pp. xiv + 431, price not mentiond.

This is a major study of the US role in South Asia during 1947–1965. That period comprised the American presidentships of Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy (tragically shortened) and Lyndon Johnson; the Prime Ministerships of Jawaharlal Nehru and Lal Bahadur Shastri in India; and the presidentships of Jinnah, Liaquat Ali, a clutch of short-term civilian heads of government, and General Ayub Khan in Pakistan. Two questions now arise.



First, why does this diplomatic history abruptly end in 1965? The success of the Soviet Union in 1966 in brokering the Tashkent Agreement after the second Indo-Pak war of 1965 signalled an outstanding failure of American foreign policy. US thinking about South Asia came full circle. Beginning with indifference towards this region in 1947, the United States became greatly immersed thereafter with its baffling complexities. The choice of alignment lay between India, which in politico-ideological terms represented "the Third World's most prominent neutralist State", and Pakistan, but "largely for military-strategic reasons stemming from its proximity both to the Soviet Union and the Middle East". Eisenhower definitively exercised that choice in favour of Pakistan when the US concluded a mutual security pact with it in 1954.

Second, and to explain this sub-optimal—almost unnatural—choice, the author explores the external environment then confronting the United States; the major internal developments in South Asia; Indo-Pak conflictual relations since their birth; and the role of important extra-regional actors like the UK, Soviet Union and China. A significant conclusion of this study is: "Analyzed dispassionately and with the benefit of hindsight, the American alliance with Pakistan appears a monumental strategic blunder". Apropos: "It drained U.S. resources, provided Washington with little return on its sizeable investment, bound the United States awkwardly to the fate of one of the Third World's most troubled and least stable nations and made Pakistan dependent on the largesse of a distant and not always reliable superpower for its national survival". US support to Pakistan, incidentally, encouraged its intransigence on the Kashmir issue, which steadily became intractable. However, India was forced, in consequence, to increase its defence expenditure and adopt a diplomatic counter-strategy by forging closer ties with the Soviet Union. Thereafter, US relations with the two South Asian adversaries soon acquired the attributes of a zero-sum game.

Musing over the tantalizing counterfactual of history, the author speculates that a strong Indo-American cooperative relationship might have yielded greater political dividends to the United States. Even a policy of "careful evenhandedness" and "strict impartiality" would have better suited US geopolitical interests in South Asia by insulating the United States from "becoming the central player in a self-defeating regional arms race". These two other available options were rejected by the US administration in favour of the third choice of a politico-military alignment with Pakistan. Why? The author correctly notes that the United States was then being driven by its irrational fears of international Communism, and that a "domino effect" could shrink the area comprising the "free world". Consequently, a primordial sense of insecurity shaped American policies towards South Asia, and introduced Cold War dynamics into this region that was of peripheral interest to superpower rivalry in those years.

Taken in their historical sweep a cyclical pattern of active interest and benign neglect illustrates the American engagement with South Asia. The Indo-Pak war of 1965 was followed by the US's limited disengagement from the region. A fresh engagement with Pakistan occurred in 1971 after it facilitated the US opening to China. This re-engagement was greatly fortified by the Soviet lurch into Afghanistan in 1979, which led to the elevation of Pakistan into a strategic ally of the United States to confront the Soviet advance towards the warm waters of the Indian Ocean. Currently, the US has come to the realization that Pakistan's real problems are internal, and relate to its parlous political and economic situation. The influential Council on Foreign Relations Report has gone to the extent of pronouncing Pakistan to be a "failed" State. Whether the nuclear tests conducted by India constitute fresh reasons for the United States to revive its flagging interests in Pakistan and dilute its growing relations with India is a conundrum that the US must ponder over, and shortly resolve.

This is one of the finest books yet written on US relations with India and Pakistan. It presents many unusual insights based on painstaking archival research. What requires especial commendation is the author's graceful prose, which also has the virtue of being precise and lucid. Perhaps a historian's vision is desperately needed to illumine the shadowy corridors of international relations.

P.R. Chari is Co-Director, Institute for Peace and Conflict Studies, New Delhi.

Education as an Instrument of Social Change

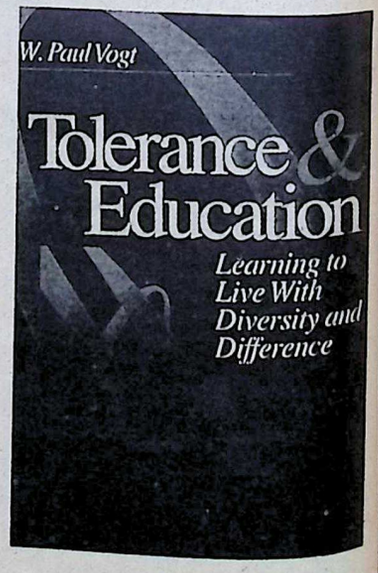
Karuna Chanana

TOLERANCE AND EDUCATION: LEARNING TO LIVE WITH DIVERSITY AND DIFFERENCE

By W. Paul Vogt

Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, California, 1997, pp. i-xxiii + 289, $46.00

The book under review bridges the gap between theory and practice. In the author's words, his 'main theoretical aim was to determine whether education fosters tolerance... and how it is learned in schools and colleges.' The practical aim was to look for concrete guidelines about how to teach tolerance. Vogt contends that in comparison with values of altruism, universalism, caring and understanding of others, tolerance does not receive so much attention and is minimal and, therefore, crucial. According to him, it is the first step toward civility.



The book falls within the broad framework of modernization and education, in general, and the relationship between formal education or schooling and change in values and attitudes, in particular. In other words, it is based on the premise that education can be an instrument of social change at the societal and individual level.

The book draws heavily upon direct and indirect evidence of research from across varied disciplines. Therefore, it is basically a process of synthesising the outcomes of micro-researches or secondary source material. Vogt pre-

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sents qualitative as well as quantitative evidence to substantiate the positive associations between tolerance and education and the magnitude of the correlations.

The book is spread over seven chapters. Chapter one defines tolerance and provides a brief historical review. Chapter two strives to answer the question: should we teach tolerance? While conceding that the answer is problematic, he gives three reasons for teaching tolerance. These are (i) for promoting diversity and equality, (ii) for interpersonal skills in pluralistic and egalitarian societies, and (iii) because tolerance stands on the border between positive and negative relations between people.

Chapter three is addressed to the question: is tolerance learned, especially in schools? On the basis of cross-national and intra-national evidence, he answers the question in the affirmative. The most important predictors are education, age and religious orientation. In addition, certain personality characteristics such as commitment to democratic values, feelings of threat and self-esteem, are also very strong predictors of tolerance and these, in turn, are influenced by education.

Chapters four and five present indirect and direct evidence of the association between tolerance and schooling. Direct attempts to teach tolerance are made through new curricula or through manipulation of social environment (through desegregation in USA and reservations in India). The evidence in favour of the former i.e. direct instruction is discouraging while the effect of social contact is encouraging.

Chapter six presents the implications of evidence for policy and practice. While conceding that causes and correlates of the association between tolerance and education are complex, Vogt believes that it is possible to provide guidelines for educational policy and practice.

The book falls within the broad framework of modernization and education, in general, and the relationship between formal education or schooling and change in values and attitudes, in particular. In other words, it is based on the premise that education can be an instrument of social change at the societal and individual level.

The last chapter focusses on research and how it can help convert tolerance as a goal to a set of achievable educational objectives. Thus, this chapter offers conclusions in order to organize further research and thereby to help design schooling to promote tolerance.

Inspite of the complexity of the task, Vogt defines tolerance as it 'often involves support for the rights and liberties of others, others whom one dislikes.... Self-control is a key component of tolerance.' The opposite of tolerance, according to Vogt, is discrimination, not prejudice. Tolerance is more of a behaviourial disposition while prejudice is a feeling. Tolerance is the lowest acceptable level of group harmony.

He identifies three overlapping but distinct categories of tolerance defined by its objects i.e. the toleratees. These categories are political, social and moral. Political tolerance, he contends, is the easiest to define. Social tolerance relates to ascriptive criteria as in apartheid or in untouchability. Yet the line between social and political tolerance is very thin. The activities in the private or moral realm are the most contested in the political arena such as gay rights and abortion. He concludes that the influence of education on all three types of tolerance, though not large, in unmistakable. Education increases tolerance and reduces prejudice and stereotyping of political, social and moral groups.

He identifies four forms or processes of learning in which schooling may promote tolerance. These four ways are not mutually exclusive. These are: (i) personality development, (ii) cognitive development, (iii) intergroup contact, and (iv) civil, moral and multicultural instruction. He also talks of inbuilt contradictions such as ethnic pride, which is central to multicultural education, being contrary to universalism. According to Vogt, these four theories or processes explain the correlations between tolerance and education under the right circumstances and with the necessary political will.

Vogt locates his discussion in the context of functionalism and conflict theory. Although he agrees that his work falls more in the realm of functionalism yet he is reluctant to be labelled so narrowly because like Simmel and Coser he believes that 'conflict can be functional'. Those who criticize functionalism have two main arguments. First, that democracy is a trick to keep the oppressed from turning revolutionary. Second, tolerance and democracy may be fine for prosperous societies but are luxuries for the poor societies, more so for the poor in these societies, who cannot appreciate civil liberties on hungry stomachs.

To counter these arguments, Vogt depends on the works of Amartya Sen and Partho Das Gupta, who are not eurocentric and who have provided sufficient evidence that famine and disease are less frequent in democratic societies. Therefore, he argues that democracy, rights, liberties and tolerance are good for societies as a whole and for people in them, including the poor. He says that conflict theorists may oppose particular forms of democracy, yet there is overwhelming evidence to show that civil liberties have a positive relationship with democracy which is desirable for promotion of tolerance and other similar values.

According to Vogt there are hundreds of paths from education to tolerance and the trick is to choose the right one for the right problem. Each one of us will be concerned with a specific problem, and therefore one needs to 'satisfice' not optimize because there is no one best solution for all problems. Vogt contends that he has provided a large body of knowledge organized or indexed into 'chunks' which can be used for specific problems.

The author's main focus is the American society and the researches used by him are eurocentric, yet the book will be of use to those who are interested in using education as an instrument of inculcating values of equality, human rights, peace, diversity, etc. because each of these presupposes a level of tolerance of difference.

He contends that academic tracking leads to ethnic and social class segmentation. The school system, especially the elite private schools in India, needs to look closely at such evidence where academic tracking has become a common practice.

This book covers a vast resource of researches and covers issues of race, ethnicity and multiculturalism. It also raises issues which fall in the realm of sociology of knowledge and curriculum formulation. In addition, the practitioners of the art of teaching value-education will find it of immense help. Whether one agrees with his reinterpretation of the analyses of secondary source material is a moot question. The point is that he has been able to unravel several of the complexities of the problem under discussion.

There are several parallels with the Indian situation especially the policy of reservations and its implications for the process of schooling and inculcating values of tolerance. If we wish to live with diversity and difference, the data presented herein may provide a direction as to whether schooling can achieve the tasks set for it or not. It also forewarns the educationists of the weaknesses of such a perspective. The limitations of schooling as well as strengths are brought out cogently.

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Race and racism, ethnicity and ethnocentrism, class, multicultural education, desegregation, discrimination, bias, prejudice and sterotype are given a lot of space because these are at the core of diversity and difference. What is surprising is that gender differences hardly find any place. Even Carol Gilligan's work has been interpreted in a manner to suit his argument. He misses the main point in Gilligan's work that the very definition and the components of moral development or moral education or cognitive development would have to be reworked if women's experience and perspective were to be incorporated. The non-recognition of gender as a parametre along with class, race and ethnicity raises the question: What kind of diversity and difference is Vogt talking about? What kind of tolerance? Does mainstream social science in the U.S. ignore gender even at the end of the twentieth century?

Yet I would not like to undermine the contribution of this book which has vast theoretical as well as practical significance. A book dealing with tolerance, diversity and difference in a world ridden with conflict and violence offers endless opportunities for the practitioners of the art of schooling.

Karuna Chanana is Professor, Zakir Hussain Centre for Educational Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

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Important Work, Indifferently Executed

S. Shukla

FIFTH SURVEY OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH (1988–92): TREND REPORTS

National Council of Educational Research and Training

Delhi , 1997, pp. xii + 735, price not stated.

It was as well that from the Third *Survey* (NCERT 1978/83), this work was institutionalized and hopefully will continue in future as well. For it was, as it were a purely extra-departmental exercise in the *Second*, after the late M.B. Buch had started the *First* at the Centre of Advanced Study of Education at M.S. University, Baroda. It has served as guide to research scholars for commencing their own work. The psychologist Director of NCERT, the late Professor Shib Mitra, broadened the disciplinary base of these surveys by including scholars from other desciplines among authors and editorial board. This practice has been continued in this fifth quinquennial effort. That is some advance over the pioneering effort of the late J.P. Naik who, even as he joined the Ministry of Education as Adviser for elementary education in the sixties started documenting Ph. D. theses in Education, which naturally did not extend to other areas, across disciplinary boundaries. For, Naik learnt the worth and use of social sciences in later capacities such as Member-Secretary, Education Commission (1964–66) and, Founder Member-Secretary, Indian Council of Social Science Research.

The present volume continues in the traditions so formed though with a bigger time-lag. It continues (a) to count some distinguished social scientists among its authors and on the editorial board but also (b) some of the original deficiencies of its predecessors which were sought to be corrected somewhat in the *Third* and *Fourth Surveys*. As always, it uses Ph. D. scholars' summaries of their theses as the material on which authors of the surveys write their chapters. This misses out sometimes on more significant findings both of the theses, and elsewhere. One has to recognize, too, of course, that it would be difficult to get anyone to go into all the material dispersed all over the country. But apparently, somehow the very range of the material itself has been a little thin this time and it has perhaps been avoidably and, in fact unnecessarily, perhaps even artificially split into may more chapters. Thus the distinguished social anthropologist Sachchidananda has had to rely on thirty-one summaries only and do without some of the material now spread out to chapters on scheduled castes, minorities etc., for the chapter on sociology of education. A small number of studies have in his chapters had to be rather fully summarized and a less than complete view of sociology of education is available. The late B.N. Mukherji who did important psychometric work at the Council for Social Development at Delhi and later at the Indian Statistical Institute, Calcutta has, as member of the editorial board as well as author of the chapter in educational psychology made a contribution which stands out but hardly bears the mark of stature of the author. P.R. Panchmukhi uses thirty entries for the chapter on economics of education and Gulistan Kerawalla for comparative education only fifteen in the latter case, definitely more material is available in other chapters although, as she indicates, the interest in this important area is not very widespread, decadal numbers of theses being (1941–76 nil; 1971–80, 36; 1981–90, 74 and 1991–2, 4), all rather loosely comparative.

The chapter on womens' studies is, understandably, a recent entry. Usha Nayar's work here does give a view of some the pedagogical work on women's education but misses out entirely on the feminist flavour of much other work in recent decades. All of this when well-known sociologists such as Karuna Chanana and Suma Chitnis figure on the editorial board! The inadequacy arising from relying on doctoral theses, largely from education departments only (though there are some from other fields) is illustrated here vividly by there being no mention of, for instance, the educational insights in Malavika Karlekar's *Voices from Within* (1991), Krishna Kumar's *What is Worth Teaching*? is similarly not brought to attention in the chapter on curriculum studies.

The foregoing somewhat negative appraisal arises from this author's unhappiness that the *Survey* continues to bear its birthmarks rather heavily and, in addition, has perhaps overdivided the field into 40 odd area chapters which will tend to guide the fresh research scholar into even more narrow visions of his work. For, as it is, the ready availability of the *Surveys* had, while introducing him/her into the subject, tended to limit the view and possibly inhibit going into much original social science and pedagogical work of our own country. Contrasting this with the earlier work, for instance, on sociology of education by Suma Chitnis for the First Research Survey of Sociology organized by the Indian Council of Social Science Research or the virtually single-handed work on documenting research on Scheduled Castes by Nirmal Malhotra which was reviewed in these columns some time back, one begins to wonder if individuals or institutions are better for some things.

On the other hand, one should be grateful for what one has, which gives one *some* idea of what is being done mainly in the departments of education in our universities. One waits anticipating what the subsequent volume (s) will bring. It is not mentioned anywhere in this volume, which appears both comprehensive and self-contained with its forty odd chapters. And in any case one must supplement this what ICSSR *Surveys*, hopefully, continue to carry.

S. Shukla has been dean, faculty of Education, Jamia Millia Islamia and Delhi University.

Locating Public Administration In A Broader Framework

K.S. Subramanian

DEVELOPMENT POLICY AND ADMINISTRATION

Edited by Kuldeep Mathur

Sage Publications, Delhi, 1996, pp. 306, Rs. 325.00

The perception of the role of the state in development and regulation has undergone a drastic change in India since the initiation of the economic policy reform in 1991. The essays in this volume are addressed to this changing context. The editor of the volume, a former Professor of Public Administration in the IIPA, New Delhi, seeks to place the wide concerns articulated by the authors in the somewhat limited and limiting context of public administration studies in India, thus perhaps unwittingly detracting from the merit of the presentations.

It is no doubt true that the theoretical methods used by public administration specialists have failed to provide useful insights into the nature of the development process, distinguished exceptions notwithstanding. Given this background of theoretical dissatisfaction, Mathur rightly advocates the locating of public administration studies in the broader socio-political and economic context and rejects the notion of a separation between administration and politics. The approach, according to Mathur, should be to include issues in the wider realm of politics, policies and governmental structures. However, this seems to negate the need for the very existence of a separate discipline called public administration.

The volume contains substantive essays, among others, by Ajit Mozoomdar on the rise and decline of development planning in India; Tushaar Shah on agriculture and rural development in the 1990s; David Potter on the Prime Minister and the bureaucracy; Kuldeep Mathur on designing poverty alleviation programmes; Neil Webster on Panchayati Raj in West Bengal and Nirmal Mukarji on district governance.

Only an insider to the system, such as Ajit Mozoomdar, can provide such an insightful analysis of the rise and

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The volume contains substantive essays, among others, by Ajit Mozoomdar on the rise and decline of development planning in India; Tushaar Shah on agriculture and rural development in the 1990s; David Potter on the Prime Minister and the bureaucracy; Kuldeep Mathur on designing poverty alleviation programmes; Neil Webster on Panchayati Raj in West Bengal and Nirmal Mukarji on district governance.

decline of development planning in India. In the longest essay of the volume, he touches on the development perspective, politics and planning, machinery of planning, policy analysis, planning models, policy instruments, federalism and planning, and the present status and future relevance of planning. He concludes that the infirmities in Indian development planning have arisen more from a diminishing national consensus on development goals than from deficiencies in the planning system. A shift in the balance of political forces can reverse the trend and a new consensus built on the basis of well-defined priorities. As of now, the Planning Commission no longer enjoys the status and authority it had upto the mid-seventies.

Tushaar Shah in a well argued and comprehensive assessment of the agricultural and rural development scene calls for a recasting of the relationship between the state and the institutions of economic development—the legal framework, markets and economic organizations in the private, public, cooperative and informal markets. Political analysis of the factors which stand in the way of such recasting do not receive his attention.

David Potter shows how India's bureaucracy has been profoundly marked by the ICS tradition of administration, a theme explored by him in a full-length study published in 1986. He illuminates his arguments by a meticulous analysis (not included in his earlier study) of Nehru's fortnightly letters to Chief Ministers, which show how the ICS tradition prospered during the Nehru era although Nehru was never reconciled to it. Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi carried the process forward. Potter, however, feels that the ICS tradition is under serious threat in the 1990's, arising mainly from the challenge of the other services in the bureaucracy, and the declining political support for the IAS as democracy spreads among India's lower classes. This may possibly lead to the dismantling of the colonial framework within India's post-colonial bureaucracy. Mathur's useful essay carries forward the analysis of political and social forces and shows how they have weakened the effort to achieve the goal of poverty eradication in India.

Webster examines the functioning of Panchayati Raj in a district in West Bengal during the period before the new act came into force. The CPM-led front in West Bengal has ensured that elections have been held regularly and panchayats given increased significance in local planning and implementation of development programmes. This political commitment is analyzed to examine the actual performance of these institutions with regard to mobilizing popular participation and its impact.

Mukarji, a retired ICS Officer turned scholar proposes decentralization of governance at the district level and considers decentralizing some functions like planning as inadequate. He makes a plea for extending the two-tiered federal system to a three-tiered one in which the district will have powers granted by the Constitution. This would demand entirely different structural arrangements at the district level including a reformulation of panchayat institutions.

This volume constitutes an important effort to link up the study of administrative structures to development politics and processes in India, and to promote a wider understanding of the nature of changes under way in Indian society.

K.S. Subramanian is Senior Fellow at the Indian Council of Social Science Research, New Delhi.

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COLONIAL FANTASIES
Towards a feminist reading of Orientalism

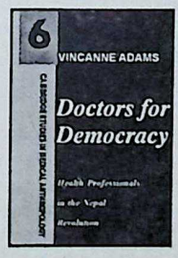
MEYDA YEGENOGLU

Meyda Yegenoglu investigates the intersection between post-colonial theory and feminist criticism, focussing on the Western fascination with the veiled women of the Orient. She examines the veil as a site of fantasy and nationalist ideologies and discourses of gender identity, analyzing travel literature, anthropological and literary texts to reveal the hegemonic, colonial identity of the desire to penetrate the veiled surface of 'otherness'. Representations of cultural difference and sexual difference are shown to be inextricably linked, and the figure of the Oriental woman to have functioned as the veiled interior of Western identity.

0-521-62658-7 PB 192pp Rs.650

DOCTORS FOR DEMOCRACY
Health Professionals in the Nepal Revolution

VINCANNE ADAMS

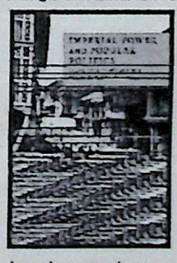


This book examines the role of the Nepali physicians in the revolutionary changes in 1990. These doctors are trained in the Western tradition, and participate in international scientific debates, yet they have always been concerned to develop a form of medical practice that was relevant to Nepali conditions, and which could speak to local conceptions about health, and so their medical practice was always politicized. Vincanne Adams argues that the commitment of these professionals to the values of science, and to public health, was crucial in their political activity, and that ideas and practices associated with the notions of 'democracy' and of 'science' supported each other..

0-521-58548-1 PB 263pp Rs.850

IMPERIAL POWER AND POPULAR POLITICS
Class, Resistance and the State in India, c 1850-1950

RAJNARAYAN CHANDAVARKAR



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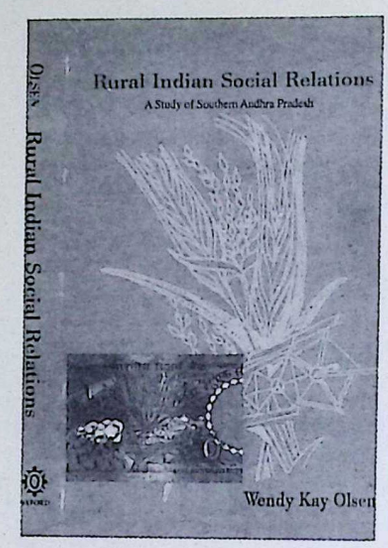
Not By Bread Alone

R. Rajamani

RURAL INDIAN SOCIAL RELATIONS: A STUDY OF SOUTHERN ANDHRA PRADESH

By Wendy Kay Olsen

Oxford University Press, 1996, pp. 345, Rs. 595.00



The title of the book and the background of the author who is a Lecturer in Social Research Skills in the Universities of Salford and Lancaster in U.K., do not prepare us fully for the contents of this book. The methodology and narration has a distinct social research flavour, but beyond that one gets into a scholarly treatise on economic and exchange relations in two villages of Chittoor District in Andhra Pradesh. The study has concentrated on the measurement of economic variables except income, as there was a problem in collecting even crude data on income. As the author puts it candidly, 'business and trading activity, where monetised inputs and outputs and profits would be known to respondents, is precisely the area where people in the study villages were most reluctant to divulge details.' This limitation has not come in the way of an excellent analysis of food policies and the marketing of paddy and rice both at the macro(State) level and micro-(village) level, State and local groundnut market structure, credit relations, borrowing and saving in the study area and interlinkages in local exchange relations. The analysis is rooted in some painstaking data collection spread over 98 tables (of which 82 are in the main text) and 23 figures. The methods are quite empirical within the limitations described.

The book starts as a study of rural exchange relations in southern Andhra Pradesh in the years 1986–87. The focus was to be on distress sales but the study led to a wider coverage of exchange relations per se and the process of exploitation that may be implicit in them. It also includes comments on the structure of property ownership and the control or management of labour. In the process, the author does justice to the title of the book, giving a materialist explanation of the social change, particularly in exchange relations.

The scheme of the book proceeds on the basis of a theoretical exposition on the phenomenon of distress sales. Two major frameworks are mentioned i.e., the Marxist and the neoclassical analysis: the author deals extensively with Bhaduri's views about the semi-feudal mode of production as also Bharadwaj's treatment of the role of commerce vis-a-vis production. The neoclassical work comes in handy in dealing with the analysis of the credit market. Yet this framework, according to the author, has not been hamstrung, as more reliance is placed on primary fieldwork comprising both interviews and personal experiences. Two relatively remote dryland villages in the drought affected area of Rayalaseema were chosen for the study as perhaps there would be a greater propensity for distress sales in such villages. Apart from the topography and other details of the villages, the class and caste structure in the villages has been dealt with. The villages had a high number of landless and landed workers, smaller numbers of farmers and capitalist landlords whose numbers along with merchants, artisans and others (including salaried classes) was marginally higher than the workers in one village and marginally less in the other village. An emphatic statement is made at the beginning about the enormous economic inequality in the study area. Gold holdings is used as one indicator, showing the amounts owned varied by a factor of over 150 from the poorest to the richest class. The skewed distribution of wealth is also seen as a major factor impeding growth of agricultural productivity and incomes.

The background to the field work also covers experience of subsistence amid cash cropping. An important finding is that the study area does not subsist on its own food and very few households produce all their food. However surplus food is produced and marketed. Also covered are aspects of commercialisation including sale of output, purchase of food and consumer goods, purchase of inputs, hire of labour, wage-earnings and reinvestment of profits in production. A profile of crops grown is given where paddy and groundnut dominated with some grams and coarse millets like ragi being pushed to the back over the years as groundnut expanded.

The twists and turns of State policies on food are described briefly. The inherent contradictions in remunerative food grains prices to farmers along with reasonable prices for consumers (especially the organized labour in urban areas) are highlighted. The noncoverage of millets in the procurement supply chain is also mentioned in passing. Much more analysis is made of the grain trade policies of the State Government of Andhra Pradesh, especially the scheme introduced in 1983–88, popularly known as 'Rs. 2 a kilo of rice' scheme, which involved the procurement of rice from mils in the coastal districts and subsidised distribution throughout the State. In the study area fair price shops had been opened. As far as local paddy production was concerned, it has been observed that there was price seasonality. The seasonality however, was moderate for coarse paddy, perhaps because this variety figures in the procurement and distribution mechanism of the State. In the finer varieties, however seasonality was more. Expectations of drought heightened this trend. Changes in Chinnagutti or the hybrid JL 24 variety having a high oil content which makes them marketable. The study showed that the irregularity noticed in the markets in groundnut prices was not greater than for paddy or rice. The fluctuations in groundnut prices were more due to government import policy in respect of edible oils and also on the timing of the rains. Unlike paddy, which was a cash crop of the rich, and food crop for many, groundnut was uniformly the cash crop for all. A discussion of the storage and sales of groundnut showed that there was capacity to store in all sections, but the smaller farmers sold at low post-harvest prices because of economic constraints. On the other hand, the richer cultivators had more quantity stored and reaped large seasonal profits on groundnut as they did with paddy.

Credit relations too, are studied in depth. Malcolm Darling's Punjab peasant was born, lived and died in debt. This model of the cycle of indebtedness and the policy interventions by the State and the banking system to break or moderate the extortionate grip of the moneylenders are described in brief as a theoretical framework. The author goes on to study borrowing and saving in the study villages. All the households were seen to borrow for different purposes. The total debt of an agrarian household rose from Rs. 2106 in December 1986 to Rs. 2793 in May 1987. The worker families also borrowed in kind. Loans were also taken pawning gold. The landless workers borrowed most in the hot season, the farmers in the growing season and the merchants at harvest time. Consumption loans which are not given by banks, are the largest segment. The profile of loans by the banks, one of which had a branch in one of the study villages, showed that lending to workers, artisans and salaried classes was only a small part of their outstanding debt. Intra-family lending, lending between families, lending by merchants, interest free loans—all these variations were also noticed.

Repayments of loans averaged only 34 percent of the principal amounts taken. The banks performed poorly in loan collection. An interesting finding that militates against the conventional image of the rapacious moneylender is that in 1986–87, which was the third year of below normal harvests, there were no foreclosures of loans. Another observation is that the growth of formal lending through banks has injected competition in the market and the reduction of the monopoly power of the moneylenders. Yet it did not help the smaller farmers out of the cycle of informal-sector debt and post-harvest sales.

Looking at the interlinkage of local exchange relations, the author draws two initial conclusions. One is that tied transactions are not necessarily more exploitative than the untied ones. Secondly, data also do not support a conclusion that linked contracts improve the operations of the markets. But combined with other factors like assets distribution and class structure, they do act as barriers to growth. The author concludes by referring to the need for

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even better methods of research and exploring gender relationships with a view to find more about how the social and power stratification is viewed.

Thus the egalitarian background of the author and the type of social and economic inequality in the study villages strongly determine some of the conclusions. 'Not by bread alone' but even more with 'equality' is the running theme. In this there is no place for Gandhiji's vision of villages as 'little republics', self-sufficient yet linked to the other 'republics' and trying to evolve norms of social equality and dignity and adding economic value in decentralised locations. An interesting subject like the effect on nutrition of the villagers as a result of going away from the nutritious ragi is touched upon but not developed. This analysis might have developed insights into future patterns of growth and distribution, impacting as it does on human health over a long period and through that on productivity, growth and redressal of inequalities. But absence of light on such issues cannot diminish the importance of the book as a dispassionate study of human and economic relations in an apparently stagnant rural society.

R. Rajamani is a retired civil servant who has worked on banking, rural development, technology and environmental issues.

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Rooted in Public Finance Theory

Indira Rajaraman

INCENTIVES AND INSTITUTIONAL REFORM IN TAX ENFORCEMENT: AN ANALYSIS OF DEVELOPING COUNTRY EXPERIENCE

By Arindam Das-Gupta and Dilip Mookherjee

Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1998, pp. xiv + 478, Rs. 675.00

India does not figure in the title of this book on enforcement of income taxation but is very clearly the central focus of concern, not surprisingly given that the authors Arindam Das-Gupta and Dilip Mookherjee, two of the finest economists in the world today, are of Indian origin, and given that repeated attempts at reform notwithstanding, the country remains a place where compliance with personal income taxation (the book does not by and large address the corporate income tax) is the exception rather than the rule.

This giant collective failure is addressed in the book centrally as an enforcement issue, with reform seen principally as calling for institutional correctives in tax administration. The authors deplore the absence in standard optimal tax theory of any attention to the enforcement constraint in developing countries. In what is one of the best contributions of the book, there is a succinct overview of optimal tax theory, and of the Allingham-Sandmo-Yitzhaki model of taxpayer compliance. But this examination leads the authors to conclude that the central need is for an analysis of "taxpayer compliance incentives, the effectiveness of tax administration, and the interplay between the two".

On the need for better tax administration, there can be no disagreement whatever. From an examination of data on the jurisdiction (ranges) of five District Commissioners of Income tax, the authors document the substantial variation in workload between and within the five ranges, and the astonishing lack of relationship between staff allocations and workload. Only 18% of the time of Field Inspectors, who are expected to act as the 'eyes and ears' on assessees falling within the jurisdiction of their Assessing Officers, is actually spared for field enquiries. These are merely two of the countless examples provided in the book of the tremendous scope for improvement in the functioning of tax administration in India.

The diversion of Field Inspectors from their primary function could however be just another symptom of a more fundamental problem afflicting tax administration in developing countries. There is no independent source of information on the basis of which economic activity as self-declared by the assessee can be verified. This in turn is because most business transactions in these countries are conducted in cash, by virtue of which no records are obtainable independently of those declared by the transacting parties. Even large transactions pertaining to sale of commercial real estate are routed if at all only partially through the banking system. This makes for a central vacuum in terms of the kind of formal information that only banking records can provide. Such a vacuum acts as a critical constraint on even the most well-intentioned and least corruptible elements within tax administration. Any suspicion of underreporting remains a suspicion, supported at best by circumstantial evidence, but never quantifiable in a manner that can withstand legal scrutiny. Informal information collected by Field Investigators on the scale of activity of an assessee cannot supersede that supplied by the assessee. Thus, if Field Inspectors are withdrawn from the field and placed on routine desk jobs, that may well be because of the known futility of persisting with field investigations.

The central problem with the compliance crisis in countries like India cannot therefore be enforcement failure alone in a setting where the degree of under-compliance, and indeed the very fact of non-compliance, is impossible to establish. In the standard tax compliance model, the probability, p, of the evasion being discovered and penalized cannot be substantially raised when the information base for such a discovery does not exist. No amount of refinement in the direction of endogenizing p to make it functionally dependent on the amount of concealed income can change the fundamental information constraint on p. The central problem in developing countries is the failure to take as a given the information constraint on enforcement, and to suit the design of income taxation to it. Enforcement in the developing world cannot be enhanced beyond a point to suit a design adapted to information availability in countries at a different stage of fiscal evolution.

The description of reforms in France, Canada and Spain provided in the book, while exceedingly interesting, is largely irrelevant. The French success with interactive minitels, for a harried tax administrator in the developing world, reads like science fiction. The teletransmission of tax through minitels is based on triangular communication between the assessee (either individual or corporate), the assessor and the *banking intermediary. Here again is* evidence, if evidence were needed, of the key role of the third party in completing the self-declaration route to income taxation.

An important distinction has to be made between the ability to assess potential tax payable for the economy in aggregate, and the ability to assess it for a particular assessee. The first is possible on the basis of macro data, although difficult to do. One of the major contributions of the book is the construction of a macro income-tax compliance index covering the period 1965–95. The admirably painstaking econometric exercise that seeks to establish the cause for this decline concludes that the explanatory factor is the falling frequency and efficiency of scrutiny assessment (tax audits, in U.S. parlance). A further

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cross-sectional exercise shows a positive correlation between the number of assessing officers and revenues. From these results the authors infer that an expansion in the number of assessing officers would enhance compliance incentives. This conclusion however assigns exogeneity to a variable that could just as easily be the endogenous response of a tax administration that has learned over time the information limits on scrutiny. Cross-sectional variations in assignment of assessing officers could also be an endogenous response to variations by occupation and jurisdiction in the information constraint.

It is the information constraint itself which needs to be addressed in both an occupation-specific manner, and more generally through computerization of records. This rather than enhancements of numbers of assessing officers is what is urgently needed. Singapore provides an example of a tax system that has achieved efficiency despite almost total neglect of tax audits, through an exclusive focus on information and the effective processing thereof. For countries like Singapore with access to independent sources of information, self-declaration is the least-cost option and clearly the sensible choice. For countries on the other side of the information divide, other tax systems have to be devised.

The need is for an alternative to self-declaration from which to compute the tax liability of a particular assessee. Developing countries have attempted to do this in two ways. One is by deducting tax at the point or source at which income is received (TDS). Philippines is an example of a system that has relied exclusively on widening the scope of tax withholding. The second is to assess potential income of the assessee on the basis of objectively observable and measurable indicators specific to his occupation or profession (presumptive methods). The authors do recognize the need for both, but see them as information adjuncts to better enforcement, rather than as alternative features of tax design. As a result, the book does not for example examine enforcement issues that arise in the administration of TDS itself. Had the authors bent their minds to this issue with the same care which they devote to non-TDS administration, they would undoubtedly have discovered extensive scope for improvement. A single minor procedural alteration in TDS administration introduced in 1987–88, whereby the responsibility for collecting non-salary TDS was concentrated under one head and separated from routine assessment of tax returns, raised the share of TDS in gross collections in a single year from 22% to 30%. There has been no change in administrative arrangements since then and correspondingly no change in the share of TDS until 1995–96, when a substantial widening of the TDS net led to a further rise in the TDS share to 35%.

TDS offers an alternative point of taxation. A move to an alternative base of taxation has proved rewarding in a number of developing countries and in a number of contexts. The lead provided by Francisco Gil Diaz in designing for Mexico a MAT on the corporate sector based on a presumptive rate of return to gross assets has been emulated elsewhere with considerable revenue success, although the authors are wrong when they describe the Indian MAT of *1996 as presumptive* (p. 440). There is no presumptive element whatever in the currently operative Indian MAT, which is merely a minimum tax on declared book profits. The Mexican levy itself is erroneously described thus: "The actual tax paid by a company in a year is the maximum of the asset tax and the corporate income tax due. Hence a company reporting a rate of return higher than 5.7 per cent would not incur any additional tax liability" (p. 311). That is incorrect. The Mexican tax requires payment in full of the corporate income tax, with the minimum tax (TRA) becoming payable only if corporate tax paid falls below the TRA.

The need for presumptive norms for effective taxation in the developing world is readily apparent when confronted with the four components of enforcement failure listed by the authors: the identification gap; the filing gap; the reporting gap; and the collection gap. The identification and filing gaps could be closed as the income tax authorities in India are now attempting to do with reference to six criteria (ownership/use of a telephone, motor vehicle, residential floor area above a specified minimum or a credit card; foreign travel; and membership of exclusive clubs). The declared aim is to double the number of filers by the year 2000. Aside from the issue of whether the increased workload can be handled by existing methods, it is clear that the closing of these gaps will be revenue-unproductive unless the critical reporting gap is closed. That in turn is impossible until the reporting gap is known. And the reporting gap in turn will be known only if there is some independent basis of determining tax liability. Australia is an example of a developed country where occupation-specific presumptive norms are used as benchmarks within a system based on self-declaration. The presumptive systems in Israel and elsewhere surely deserved greater and more updated attention. The occupation-specific tahshiv in Israel was phased out two decades ago on the recommendations of a tax reform committee which saw that system as primitive. The introduction of self-declaration saw a decline in revenue buoyancy. Recognizing the revenue rewards of primitivism, the use of presumption was re-introduced under an alternative name (tadrih).

The comprehensive survey of tax reform the world over leads the authors to identify computerization and attention to information technology as the dominant components. If this is so, more attention than one paragraph (p. 275) is called for on overcoming possible Luddite opposition. Computerization is needed no matter how income taxation is attempted, and is needed also in the sphere of indirect taxation especially if a VAT is contemplated. Indeed, one way by which income taxation through self-declaration can be made more effective is by using the VAT information base as a cross-check. The authors do not examine this although they do mention in passing the Bolivian VAT-supplementary income tax, an interesting formal link between income and indirect taxation whereby VAT paid by individuals can be credited against a 10% flat rate income tax. The motive behind its introduction was to plug VAT evasion.

Future directions for the improvement of the information base of income taxation in India must necessarily move in tandem with the information base developed for the move to a VAT. The conventional administration separation of income taxation from indirect taxation is no longer useful. Since such a merger of information systems is possible only with computers, the speed of computerization of tax administration is where future attention should critically be focused.

The very commendable contribution the book makes is to bring administrative issues to the forefront in a manner possible only when the authors are firmly rooted in the theory of public finance. For that reason, this book deserves to be widely read by students of public finance in addition of course to tax administrators and all those interested in issues of governance more generally.

Indira Rajaraman currently holds the Reserve Bank of India Chair at the National Institute of Public Finance and Policy. Prior to this, she was for eighteen years on the Faculty of the Indian Institute of Management at Bangalore.

Globalization and the Economy

S. Krishna Kumar

ON THE FALL AND RISE OF ECONOMIC LIBERALISM: THE MAKING OF THE ECONOMIC GULAG

By Frederic F. Clarimont

The Other India Press, 1997, pp. 350, Rs. 150.00

The Marshallian cross of demand and supply is ruling the roost in the circles of economic decision-making in the entire world cutting across the specificities of geographic boundaries. As is well known this is ample testimony to the hegemony achieved by neoliberalism, finance and free trade through the skilful manipulation of the international financial institutions, which has been made possible by a set of rich countries advocating the cause of finance and industry. Rather than the efficient Pareto-optimal outcome emerging from the market, through the working of the invisible hand, the world is currently witness to nations and currencies being in turmoil due to the power relationships operating in the forex markets. The currencies flowing from one part of the globe in a day far outstrips the total value of trade

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... this transition of economics from the classical political economy traditions, characterized by the primacy of space it gives to production to the neoclassical phase where exchange of all the existent commodities matters, has led to the depoliticizing of an important social science which is not without consequences.

in goods and services produced in a year, only revealing the gravity of speculation during the current period. It is not without reason that the mainstream textbook theories, which do not give due consideration to the dynamic power relationships found to operate in the global plane, are inadequate to provide an explanation for mass unemployment, poverty, deteriorating terms of trade and stagnant economic growth, which hovers over the world economy. As a matter of fact this transition of economics from the classical political economy traditions, characterized by the primacy of space it gives to production to the neoclassical phase where exchange of all the existent commodities matters, has led to the depoliticizing of an important social science which is not without consequences. After the brief Keynesian interregnum and the development planning episodes in the 1950s, the state-of-art in economic theory has been of the neoclassical fashion. The book under review is an attempt made in this regard towards bringing the tools of classical political economy in understanding the dynamics of the functioning of the world economy. It basically deals with the role of transnational corporations in the underdeveloped state of affairs prevailing in the LDCs.

It is indeed pertinent to note that the interventionist planning which carried with it the relevance of public intervention has brought an element of technology diffusion and creation of industrial base in countries like India and Brazil. But it should not be forgotten that the bipolar power structure in the globe in the post World War II scenario facilitated the flow of development aid into the less developed world. It goes without saying that without the overt support of the Soviet Union, the development planning in the Third World would have been a bitter failure. Nonetheless, the attempt made by the author to portray these episodes of limited intervention as the case of the demise of liberalism in the world affairs is too far-fetched an argument.

Not only that the net inflow of aid into the developing countries had fallen over years, but the sad fact remains that the non-interest bearing inflow has almost ceased. The extent to which the international financial institutions have been able to extend their tentacles over the less developed countries ever since the fissures in the Soviet Union and the eruption of the Mexican debt crisis i.e., in the decade of eighties and ninetles has been unprecedented. The integrated financial markets, thanks to the advancements in electronics and computers, has furthered the possibility of the spread of the financial contagion across boundaries in seconds. It was only recently that the world was witness to the revising of the growth estimates by the OECD countries in the wake of the Southeast Asian debacle. The probability of LDCs contracting cold in the wake of Europe sneezing is more real today than ever before.

At the same time while the deteriorating terms of trade of the primary commodities over time reduces the purchasing power of the inhabitants of the less developed world, ditching the poor peasants further into the whirlpool of indebtedness, it indirectly makes a way out for the developed world from the recession in which they are engulfed in, this being made possible through the reduction of the costs of the industrial raw materials which enters into the cost of production of the developed West. Nonetheless, Clairmont's argument that the golden age of capitalism was specifically due to the wars which were waged by US in Vietnam is indeed adulatory, with this probably the hi-tech discussion and applause about the wonder that is capitalism remains exposed. For military Keynesianism at the cost of the lives of developing world could better serve the mission of providing employment in the developed world, the subscription of the euthanasia of the rentier, as envisioned in Keynes' *General Theory* was not needed.

Country after country, notwithstanding the long run implications on the social indicators of living (well documented by Cornia, Jolly and Stewart) are subjected to the deflationary policies engendering reduction in the levels of real income. The post-colonial states in the developing world have been deprived of their powers of macro-economic policy decision making due to the powers that dominate the international financial institutions in the form of rentier and capitalist interests. Contrary to the widely held notions there has only been a marginal increase in the total inflow of direct foreign investment to the less developed world, moreover much of this has been to areas in and around East Asia, this would mean that the underpinnings of the international division of labour remains more or less the same. Limits to capital control are rarely in operation in the developing world. The LDCs seem to be at the mercy of a handful of foreign institutional investors. It is a drama in which Soros and Leeson are the main actors—an unfortunate management of the world economy by a group of finance managers.

Notwithstanding the decline in the per capita availability of foodgrains, the agriculture in the developing world is restructured to cater to the consumption of the developed world. Appropriately, as Baran puts it, what is cooked in the kitchen is not decided in the kitchen. Kenya now concentrates in the production of flowers to cater to the Holland market and India is all set to reorient towards the intensive production of fruits, vegetables and marine products. In the midst of abject poverty, in nexus with the warlords of Somalia, the rich marine produce is being fished out, by the fishing vessels of the United States. Indeed a disgrace, that Guinea Bissau was offered four times its GDP by Italy, if the former had entitled it an opportunity to dump it's nuclear waste, this is the vulgar extent of commodification unbounded. Ken Sarowiwa, for having articulated the demand of the Ogoni tribals for a just share of the oil revenues of the Dutch Shell Company in order to ameliorate their poverty, was decapitated by the military junta regime in Nigeria. Recently a Russian economist, Kotovsky observed that an outflow estimated of a minimum of $50 bn and a maximum of $400 bn from Russia in the early 1990s has been responsible for western Europe not sliding into a recession. It is therefore, not without reason, that we have a dominant group who have been consistently theorizing about the ideology of neoliberalism, globalization and privatization. These instances bespeak volumes of the alliance of the multinational buccaneer capital with the post colonial states in the developing world.

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The author, taking a dig at the much professed view of the gains of foreign investment asks, "What were the cumulative effects of international investments on the ryots in Bengal and Bihar, on the Chinese peasant in the Yangtze Valley, on the subsistence African, the Andean Indian, the Middle Eastern fellah, the Cuban landless labourer?" But the sad fact remains that much of his investigation is confined to the colonial period and not the post-colonial stage, which is expected in a book published in 1995. Of course, he makes some marginal comments on the relative performance of India vis-a-vis China in this regard, which by any yardstick of measure is too insufficient. The author seems to consider narrations on economic history of the colonial period as an end in itself, rather than taking a leaf out of it to contextualize the current scene. The author quotes Mossadueq who claims "the petrol industry has not bettered the life of the people of Iran by any means, despite 50 years of their presence in the country." (p. 298) This statement made in 1955 about the Anglo Iranian Oil Company in itself is of course relevant, but the author ends it there, without further exploring as to what the scene is currently in the Middle East. Despite the quadrupling of the oil prices in the 1970s, Saudi Arabia is on the verge of a balance of payment crisis, this is due to the prolific extravaganza of the members of the royal family on the import of luxurious commodities from abroad.

On the one hand, we have the inextricable links which the developing countries have with the international financial institutions which engender in them compulsions to pursue policies which give due position to the interests of capital as such, while on the other hand we have indirect attempts being made to relatively disempower governments vis-a-vis NGOs by devolving development aid, through these alternate channels. As a matter of fact, the end of the developmentalist state is the long run interest of finance capital. Though Clairmont's work has to a large extent done justice towards characterizing the political underpinnings of the economic operations in the colonial period, it has been a failure in conceptualizing the growing challenges of the state during the heyday of the dominance of transnational capital.

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Letter from London

Stephen Moss

A recent addition to the battery of UK literary prizes—sometimes it seems there are more awards for fiction in the UK than actual novels published—is the Orange Prize, which began life in 1996 with a blaze of publicity that has been repeated in the two years since. In such an overcrowded marketplace, to gain that level of attention and to have established itself in just three years is a remarkable achievement.

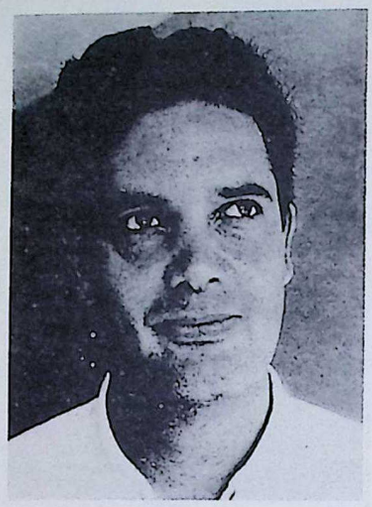
In what might loosely be called marketing terms, it has three key advantages.. First, excellent organisation which from the beginning has maximised news potential and made pioneering use of the internet and other media to generate public interest. Second, a prize of pounds 30,000, the biggest single award for a book in the UK. And third the fact that it is only open to women writers. That stipulation is, on the face of it, bizarre and there were plenty of critics back in 1996 who wrote the prize off as meaningless, perhaps even counter-productive to the cause of women's writing. A good writer is a good writer, regardless of gender, was the argument. Jane Austen, George Eliot, Virginia Woolf stand comparison with any male writer, and it is patronising to suggest that women can't compete with the best men. In some ways those critics had logic on their side—the best women do happily compete with men and win the big prizes; Arundhati Roy, Kate Atkinson and Pat Barker have all won major literary awards in the past few years. But the very controversy over a women-only prize, the furore it generated, was enough to get the Orange Prize off to a flying start and it is now firmly fixed in the literary calendar.

The arguments continue. Anita Brookner, a former Booker Prize winner, has in the past asked not to be considered for the award on the grounds that she does not believe in gender-specific judgments. This year Nadine Gordimer, whose book *The House Gun* would have stood a very good chance of at least being shortlisted, asked for it to be withdrawn on similar grounds. But the general verdict is that it creates interest in literary fiction and draws in new readers through its educational work, and the critics are now in a distinct minority.

The 1998 Orange Prize has just been awarded to the Canadian author Carol Shields, for her novel *Larry's Party* and this year a quite different controversy stirred up interest in the prize; the absence on the six-book shortlist of British writers. Of the six writers shortlisted, four were North American (Shields, Kirsten Bakis, Ann Patchett, Anita Shreve), and one Irish (Deirdre Purcell), leaving the UK with a partial claim on the other, Pauline Melville, who is Anglo-Guyanese. Some saw this as a disaster for British writing (North Americans were also in the ascendant last year, when the prize went to the Canadian Anne Michaels); others were more sanguine and insisted that the pendulum would swing and British writers would come to the fore.

The original arguments over the gender question perhaps obscured the truly interesting point about the Orange Prize, which is that, unlike the Booker and Whitbread Prizes, it allows entries from the US as well as Canada. UK and Commonwealth writers now have to compete with the literary leviathan of North America, and so far the battle has been pretty uneven. Last year, Lisa Jardine, one of the co-founders of the prize, accused British women writers of parochialism, of an obsession with

. . . Lisa Jardine, one of the co-founders of the [Orange] prize, accused British women writers of parochialism, of an obsession with self and a failure to see the bigger picture. Some linked that failure of the imagination to the success of *Bridget Jones's Diary*—the angst-ridden chronicle of a sex-and diet-obsessed thirty-something woman which began as a newspaper column, became a best-selling novel and will shortly be made into a film. Put bluntly, British women could write domestic dramas, ran the argument, but they couldn't do literature.



self and a failure to see the bigger picture. Some linked that failure of the imagination to the success of *Bridget Jones's Diary*—the angst-ridden chronicle of a sex-and diet-obsessed thirty-something woman which began as a newspaper column, became a best-selling novel and will shortly be made into a film. Put bluntly, British women could write domestic dramas, ran the argument, but they couldn't do literature.

That view is glib: there are good, ambitious British women writers around—Janice Galloway, Jeanette Winterson, Shena Mackay, A.L. Kennedy spring immediately to mind. But it does have some seed of truth: too many women are pushed by their publishers into writing relationship-obsessed "women's fiction", artless slice-of-life narratives that are the literary equivalent of soap operas. Moreover, compared with the North Americans, who have honed their skills on creative writing programmes and sometimes have teaching to back up their writing and allow them breaks from the fiction factory, British writers can seem naive. On the surface, *Larry's Party* is a funny, simple, touching book about a middle-aged man forced to reassess his life; but probe a little deeper and its narrative control, its marvellous structure, its sheer artfulness become apparent.

North Americans are likely to make an equally powerful challenge for next year's Orange Prize: Alison Lurie's *The Last Resort* has been winning admiring notices; Toni Morrison's *Paradise* will have its supporters; new novels are due soon from Anne Tyler and Jane Smiley. Formidable writers who will each have a claim. British writers should not despair, but it should give pause for thought. Why are Americans more ambitious in terms of both content and style? Does it reflect the strength of their creative writing programmes or say something more profound about the comparative histories, cultures and literatures of Europe and America? The novel in the UK and indeed across Europe is not dead, but it unquestionably needs an alarm call. The Orange Prize, by accident perhaps, has given it one.

Stephen Moss is literary editor of the Guardian.

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Models of Dualism Theories

Sunil Ashra

DEVELOPMENT THEORY: A GUIDE TO SOME UNFASHIONABLE PERSPECTIVES

By Rune Skarstein

Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1997, pp. 150, Rs. 295.00

This book is about the review of development theory from the macro perspective. In the last two decades development theory literature has been increasingly getting oriented towards minutiae and become highly sophisticated and mathematical. Disturbed with this orientation of development theory the author has tried to put in perspective for students and teachers as also for the policy makers for better understanding of the issues involved.

Development Theory is a different kind of 'textbook' that does not deal particularly with economic theories but rather with the theories of economic development. The non-mathematical treatment of the main text ensures that even non-economists would find it equally useful, with mathematical algebra being relegated to the appendices of the respective chapters. But these appendices are repetitive of the main chapter's arguments; the details could have been avoided by keeping the text to the minimum.

Skarstein contradicts the generally held belief that the newest is always the truest. The book is presented in a chronological manner and shows that what is these days being presented as theories of economic development are actually only a segment of the wider historical literature. The book starts with Karl Marx's Theory of Capitalist Development where his views on development of capitalism are critically evaluated. Marx stressed the role of capitalism and the capitalists in creating more massive and more colossal productive forces than have all preceding generations together. According to Marx, through colonialism, foreign capital and trade the backward economies are forced to also become bourgeois eventually. The author refers to Marx's increasing pessimism about the potential of capitalist development in non-European non-capitalist social formations (referred to as 'barbarian' or 'backward' by Marx) through the intrusion of European capital. Eventually, he considered English colonialism in India as mere vandalism without any regenerating function (p. 8).

Skarstein does not however find any theory of underdevelopment in Marx's work except for a few hints at the obstacles that the internal solidity and articulation of pre-capitalist national modes of production pose to the solvent effects of trade and the importance of the character of the old mode of production itself as a precondition for economic development.

From Marx the author moves to Lenin's work on *Capitalist Development and Imperialism*. Lenin viewed capitalism only in the 'advanced countries' to be parasitic and decaying—*moribund capitalism*—as a result of the growth of monopolies and dominance of finance capital. The main objective of Lenin's book *Imperialism* was not to explain underdevelopment, but to explain opportunism, revisionism and chauvinism.

After finding no theory of underdevelopment in either Marx or Lenin the author turns to mainstream economics. First, he starts with the neoclassical school. He finds that the concept of capital in neoclassical theory to be contradictory in purely logical terms, at the same time as the theory makes several unrealistic assumptions which do not even recognize that underdeveloped economies are predominantly pre-capitalist social formations. The evidence supporting this theory has been highly disputable. Neoclassical theory's opposition to protection and persistent advocacy of free trade takes the author to the completely opposite theory of Raul Prebisch and the ECLA (U.N. Economic Commission for Latin America) school. This theory gave rise to much controversy in the 1950s and early 1960s due to the claim by Prebish that there had been a long term deterioration in periphery's terms of trade from 1870 to 1930. But this controversy did not reach any definite conclusion as critics showed evidence that did not clearly support his view. However, the relegating to a corner of ECLA school was more due to its radical opportion of foreign investment than the empirical results based criticism. The later softening of ECLA view on foreign investment, especially for Latin American countries provoked a theoretical opposition—The Dependency School. The ECLA school also advocated some sort of dependency theory. But in their view the dependency of the periphery upon the centre is of a commercial character which arises out of trade relations. The periphery's increasing dependence on the centre is supposed to imply a process of increasing impoverishment or underdevelopment at the periphery. The accumulation of capital, according to Frank, is based on the production of 'economic surplus' in the satellites, and the transfer of this surplus to the metropolis. For this pattern of accumulation to arise and continue the metropolis has to impose on its satellites a commodity producing, exports dependent economy which is acclimated to the requirements of production and consumption patterns within the metropolis itself. The perspective turns Marx upside down, the dynamics of economic development in general and capitalist development, in particular, are no longer located within the internal class structures and specific exploitative relations between social classes. Consequently, the basic characteristic of capitalism is not drive for development of the productivity of social labour, but transfer of surplus from the capitalist satellites to the metropolis.

Not only were criticisms of the Dependency School voiced theoretically but also a number of underdeveloped economices, especially the newly industrialized countries (or the NICs), experienced a process of rapid capitalist industrialization which empirically also argued that the propositions and predictions of the School did not hold. Virtually all central propositions of the Dependency School had been questioned by the 1970s, except one—namely their complete repudiation of all dualism theories. The author quotes Gabriel Palma (1978) in a summary of her critique of the Dependency School which concludes that 'Frank's direct contribution to our understanding of the process of Latin American development is largely limited to his critique of dualist modes for Latin America'. Skarstein, however, feels that Frank's acceptance of all out repudiation of dualism theories is untenable. He feels that despite their tendency to ignore the historical dimension, they are far more interesting and challenging than is imagined.

Skarstein contradicts the generally held belief that the newest is always the truest. The book is presented in a chronological manner and shows that what is these days being presented as theories of economic development are actually only a segment of the wider historical literature.

From here on the book comes to what could be considered as the main topic of the book, i.e. the models of dualism theories, prominent among these being by Lewis (1954), its extensions by Jorgenson (1961, 1970), Fei and Ranis (1964, 1966), Harris and Todaro (1970) which are models in supply-side view mould of agriculture-industry interdependence and where agriculture is seen as more or less exogenous in the interaction process. The discussion of demand-side aspect by Kaldor's contribution to dualism theories are the subject matter of Chapter 8 of the book. The author himself has also tried to extend the work of Kaldor on the effective demand aspect of the agriculture-industry interactions in this chapter as he shows that Kaldor has not taken his argument sufficiently further. Rate of growth of industrial output is determined by 'external' effective demand, originating from the growth of the agricultural surplus. The author refers to experience of very low degrees of capacity utilization which may persist for long periods of time in the industrial sector of underdeveloped economies.

The last chapter of the book is about the determinants of the 'agricultural surplus' as it is supposed that the growth of the industrial sector in underdeveloped economies depend crucially on the size and the rate of growth of the agricultural surplus—a common conclusion reached by Jorgenson, Fei and Ranis, and Kaldor despite considerable differences in their opinion theoretically.

The author is critical of the proponents of economic liberalization as the means of increasing agricultural surplus as they tend to ignore the income-distribution effects within agriculture of changes in the inter-sectoral terms of trade. Thus, they assume that turning terms of trade in favour of agriculture will bring about higher investments and hence more and rapid technical progress resulting in higher yields. But in a class-structured backward agri-

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Skarstein supports the hypothesis that technical progress in agriculture which, in turn, determines the productivity of labour and the size and rate of growth of surplus, is in the long run basically determined by the class relations and the corresponding institutional structures, including land tenures, tenancy systems and the peasant-state relationships.

culture polarized into mighty big farmers on one side and small and marginal farmers and landless labourers on the other, this may not be true. In such an economy, an improvement in terms of trade of agriculture may well result in stagnation or decline in the incomes of the latter group and an enormous increase in the incomes of the former group, who would either spend it on conspicuous consumption or save it as their propensity to consume is low. R. Gaiha (1989) and A. Bose (1993) have also argued along similar lines in their work relating to rural poverty and agriculture in a semi-industrialized economy respectively. The optimism of neoclassical economists with regard to economic liberalization and price reform as a means of achieving a long term increase in agricultural surplus is based on the implicit assumption that institutions in traditional agriculture, by virtue of their long-lasting existence, must be allocatively efficient and that their dynamic productive efficiency must follow from allocative efficiency (A. Bhaduri, 1991). They all seem to believe that there is considerable potential for 'automatic', price-induced technical progress which would result in rising productivity of labour, and consequently increasing marketed surplus in backward agriculture. But this belief as discussed by the author lacks convincing support in historical experience as well as in theory.

The author's concluding remarks throw up points for further research. Skarstein supports the hypothesis that technical progress in agriculture which, in turn, determines the productivity of labour and the size and rate of growth of surplus, is in the long run basically determined by the class relations and the corresponding institutional structures, including land tenures, tenancy systems and the peasant-state relationships. He quotes Robert Bremmer, "...there is a world of difference between the market as offering an opportunity for gain and the market as imposing the necessity to orient one's entire productive existence to maximize one's price/cost ratio to survive in competition".

In the author's opinion, the perspective of class efficiency versus dynamic productive efficiency of socio-economic institutions appears useful. Historically there have been quite a few economic formations where these two categories of efficiency coincide. The formal models which are not based on knowledge of agrarian class structures and corresponding institutions they represent may result in empty, speculative formulations. This approach, according to Skarstein, takes us back to Marx's fundamental methodology, to the necessity of understanding a class analysis in order to identify the obstacles to and the precondition of economic progress. But at the same time he finds little reason to share Marx's optimism that merely removal of these obstacles will enable underdeveloped economies simply to travel the development path of industrialized countries.

The book ends with a quote from Mahatma Gandhi cautioning against mindless destruction of the environment: "It took Britain half the resources of the planet to achieve its prosperity how many planets will a country like India require?" and the need for alternatives to traditional capitalist development is stressed.

This seems out of place as the subject matter of the book is not related to the issues of natural resources. Also no theory of underdevelopment is offered in the book which was the beginning point of the book though he tries to answer this question, albeit indirectly, in his analysis of dualistic theories which could be referred to as the core-periphery.

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Dreaming Creative Organizations

Anjali Gera Roy

DARE TO DREAM

By Anjali Hazarika

Response Books, 1997, pp. 207, Rs. 325.00

Dreams have always inspired leaders. Martin Luther King Jr. "had a dream" which transformed the lives of millions of blacks. Closer home, Nehru dreamed up a whole new nation. They have held pride of place in myth, art and literature. Think of Athene suggesting a course of action to Odysseus in a dream, or Maya's dream prophesying the birth of the Buddha; Yeats got his idea of the gyres in a dream while Coleridge's nightmarish journey in 'The Ancient Mariner' was a dream landscape. Scientists have also accorded due respect to dreams. Remember Kekule's, "Let us learn to dream, gentleman...", speech explaining how the idea of the molecular structure of benzene occurred to him through his dream of a snake with his tail in his mouth. But what do dreams have to do with the hard-nosed manager ruled by linear thinking, rational decision making and logical analysis? A lot, apparently. With the manager of the twenty-first century who values intuition, divergent thinking, emotional intelligence and—spirituality. In other words, dreams are the stuff creative managers are made of, as Anjali Hazarika, the author of *Dare to Dream*, would let us believe. "Dream", Hazarika declares, "is an ocean of possibilities, a blueprint of an attainable reality" and proceeds to use "dreamwork as a new paradigm for management development" establishing it as "a nexus to creativity"

How can "a soft, subjective approach such as dreaming" provide "the hard, objective solutions to business problems", Hazarika muses. A space for "introducing the feminine, the intuitive and the subjective elements into the masculine, the rational, the objective and somewhat mechanistic pattern of managerial thinking" has been created through the general opening out of the patristic discipline of management, particularly in view of the collapse of the rational/scientific model privileging objectivity, logic and intellect. Present holistic paradigms, on the other hand, are concerned with integrating intellect with intuition, private with public, outer with inner. As scientific modes of knowledge are exposed to be not universally but contextually true, management displays a greater alacrity to admit into its traditional bastions elements of art—tolerance of ambiguity and uncertainty, the ability to connect disparate elements, acceptance of gaps and missing elements. And ever since management became an art, creativity has become the new buzzword to be cultivated through every conceivable means, even outside traditional business disciplines, if necessary. The futuristic manager is the creative manager in whom innovativeness, flexibility, ability to explore alternatives are prized above everything else. While art and literature have long delved into the esoteric wellsprings of creativity and creative personality, management's fixation with plumbing the undiscovered sources of creativity is of very recent origin. And being result oriented, business organizations have pulled out all the stops in tracking down the mysterious process in art, music and film. Of all the potential tools for nurturing creativity, dreamwork is, perhaps, the latest.

The *raison d'etre* for the induction of dreams into creativity and both into management is provided by Montague Ullman's distinction between "two naturally recurring states of consciousness"—"waking consciousness" and "dreaming consciousness"—in his foreword to Hazarika's book. Ullman warns that in "our concern with waking accomplishments we have failed to give due concern to the innate repair mechanisms available to us nightly in the dreams we dream". Anjali Hazarika's pioneering use of dreamwork in fostering creativity is a step in this direction. She links the interest in creativity to the present century's disillusionment with technological progress and material growth. In a world faced with an unprecedented ecological and interpersonal crisis, she pleads for "a non-deified, non-religious spiritualism that enables corporate goals to resonate with the inner meanings that most people seek in their work." As opposed to the logical and quantifiable, she draws attention to the "fuzzy" realm of emotions and their impact on decision making and creativity.

Two assumptions underlie the popularity of creativity workshops in business organizations. The first is the demystification of the belief that creativity is the prerogative of the few and the second that creativity is not confined to the arts. Arts have tended to preserve a mystique around the creative process regarding it as a given. Management's debunking of the myth has been accomplished largely through its classification of creativity into different kinds thus making it as accessible to the scientist, to the innovator and the manager as to the artist.

It is obvious from her use of dream analysis that Hazarika knows her Freud and Jung and Kleitman. But her methodology and approach suggest an eclectic blending of psychoanalysis and traditional divine interpretation, with the dice loaded in favour of tradition whenever in doubt. Her sources are primarily eastern mystical texts ranging from the *Upanishads* and the Buddhist to the Tibetan and I-Ching reflecting her partiality to the pre-scientific, subjective and intuitive. Hazarika locates her theory of consciousness in the Upanishadic division of waking, dreaming, deep sleep and the transcendental fourth state. Creativity and dreams, obviously, do not emanate from the waking mind and physical senses. Both, according to Hazarika, require a suspension of the rational. Her location of creativity and dreams in the occult lends an epiphanic aura to dream images. Experiences of creative persons across disciplines affirm their shared understanding that beyond a certain point rational logic cannot answer any questions. All pathbreaking discoveries have been possible only through relinquishing straight thinking and by making that great leap out of the rational. Management, traditionally, has posited great faith in logical reasoning and empirical analysis. The contemporary prestige of creativity can be explained by a restoration of the emotional and the subjective as in the new fangled theories about emotional intelligence, rightbrained thinking and so on. Ultimately, it boils down to the status of dreams in a culture. The western world is compelled by its present crisis of reality to give due recognition to the extra-sensory and the unreal. But the Orient, for example the *Atharvaveda*, makes no distinction between dream and reality. Nor do other so-called primitive cultures.

Though apparently unconnected, dreams and creativity have a lot in common. Both belong to that nether region of the unconscious or subconscious that had traditionally been banished by mainstream management theory. Today, as boundary crossing between art and science, intellect and spirit, external and internal becomes the norm in current management thought, answers to practical problems *in the outer world can indeed be found* through latent, inner processes. Hazarika quotes William Jones, "human beings, by changing the attitudes of their minds can change the outer aspect of their lives" to prove that dreams, expressions of subconsious longings, fears, desires and anxieties, can offer a way out to hard, day-to-day problems faced by managers. Hazarika's faith in dreamwork in stimulating creativity stems from her awareness of the limits of the rational/scientific. Her understanding of creativity as a mysterious process, "a vague restlessness, a confused excitement, a dim cloud of an idea, an image in a dream, or an obscure intimation of an imminent potential solution", calls attention to its links with intituitive insight rather than willed reasoning. But she doesn't hesitate to borrow Perkins' Snowflake Model of Creativity to list the traits of creative people—commitment to personal aesthetics, sense of purpose, mental mobility, working on the edge of one's competence, objectivity and motivation. Similarly, she views the dreaming mind as free from logic or convention and aligned to divergent thinking. That dreams provide a clue, "A pictorial statement", to the dreamer's unconscious was the basis of Freudian psychoanalysis but Hazarika's exploitation of the latent content of dreams as a key to the dreamer's latent, not manifest, desires in

In a world faced with an unprecedented ecological and interpersonal crisis, she pleads for "a non-deified, non-religious spiritualism that enables corporate goals to resonate with the inner meanings that most people seek in their work." As opposed to the logical and quantifiable, she draws attention to the "fuzzy" realm of emotions and their impact on decision making and creativity.

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problem solving is new. Precisely because hitherto problem solving has been regarded as the domain of the intellect, the reasoning mind and convergent thinking. Conventional problem solving techniques proceed systematically beginning with a minute analysis of the problem, exploration and weighing of various alternatives before a particular course of action is decided upon. Hazarika's employment of dream anaysis to identify the real motives and issues underlying manifest problems deftly combines intuitive and spiritual intimations with scientific analysis.

Seeking solutions to day-to-day problems in unconscious processes, the hall mark of modern psychology, might be seen as an extension of "primitive" practices where divine aid was sought for solving mundane problems. Hazarika's strength lies in her successful invocation of these occult ethnosciences, which she supports by a highly sophisticated awareness and integration of contemporary behavioural theory.

The efficacy of Creativity 2000, Anjali Hazarika's dream workshop, is contingent upon certain preconditions the first being an intrinsic faith in dreams. Just as the oracle's message could be intercepted only by a willing receptacle, dreams yeild meaning only to those willing to let go of logic and rationalisation. Apart from the nitty gritty of following the steps prescribed by Delaney and the ability to memorize the dream in great detail dreams work, as has been proved before, through a recognition of the manner the subconscious impacts on the conscious mind. Great minds, irrespective of their vocations or disciplines, have been quick to grant dreaming consciousness its place in shaping the waking one. What comes as a surprise is the endorsement of this view by the greatest proponents of rational/scientific knowledge such as Neil Bohr, Marie Curie or even Einstein.

Envisioning a new cultural orientation, a new age which will set the conditions for the growth of creativity and other noetic experiences, Hazarika spells out her vision of Creativity 2000. Her definition aims to integrate the masculine, the "how" with the "feminine", the "why" dimension of creativity and seeks to "re-balance and re-own the feminine principle—relationships, belonging, interconnectedness and interdependence." Hazarika's design for Creativity 2000 is detailed in concrete terms beginning with the statement of objectives, the outline of sequences and the action plan.

The method used in the workshop—after the preliminaries such as the conceptual inputs on creativity and dreaming are taken care of—leans heavily towards ancient mystical practices relating to dream incubation which, Hazarika informs us, is modernized by Gayle Delaney. The ritual of sleeping in a sacred space in anticipation of receiving a divinely inspired dream cuts across cultures. In fact, the exact precedent for writing down a problem on a piece of paper answers to which would be communicated in a dream has been reported from Egypt. The use of dreams in healing mentioned by Hazarika has also been documented by several societies. Hazarika borrows the Menezes version of Delaney's technique to combine the "dynamic synergy of intellect and intuition". While her conceptual input on dreams familiarizes her participants with dream theory, the incubation proper harks back to pre-scientific rituals practised across the globe. As dreams are formed by the visual language of symbols and pictures, the use of visualization is suggested as the most appropriate method for the reconstruction of dreams. Learning to translate the dream into its visual imagery, the articulation of an inchoate experience precedes the sharing of the dream essentially involving an interpretation of the metaphors used by the dreamer by the group as a whole thus leading to an enhanced sense of community. Hazarika employs the four stages of the *experiential dreamwork* developed by Ullman. In Stage 1, the dreamer presents a dream to the group who get an idea of the whole by seeking clarifications though the dreamer's decision to share his dreams is entirely left to him. But the mere act of sharing the dream signals a willingness to lower defences. Stage II is used by the group members to make the dream their own—by interpreting its language and feelings experienced by the dreamer. These two stages help in making the dream clearer to him, in the first by its expression and in the second by its projection on to the group. In Stage III, the dream is returned to the dreamer who is free to share his understanding of the dream to the extent he is willing to. The purpose of this stage is to identify the context shaping the dream, for instance, by asking questions about his feelings and thoughts before drifting into sleep.

Reading aloud the dream or playing it back provides a better perspective and understanding of the dream. The point of the whole excercise is to have the group help the dreamer discover the relationship between the dream and the life context by asking questions, interpreting images and offering suggestions. In case, the group process proves to be ineffective, Delaney's *Dream Interview* can be resorted to. The *Dream Interview* is different from psychoanalysis in the sense that the dreamer is encouraged through questionnaires to interpret his own dream rather than depending on the authoritiative interpretation of the psychiatrist.

Thus, Anjali Hazarika's interest in dreamwork grows from a disillusionment with excessive reliance on empirical analysis, sensory data—the conventional staples of management. Her emphasis on the intuitive, the mystical and the subjective is in consonance with the concept of "emotional intelligence" developed by Goleman. Dreams appear to have a natural affinity with the arts in their employment of visual metaphors and the way they bridge the head and the heart. In fact, the idea of the poet amalgamating disparate experiences is closely reproduced in the notion of "kaleidoscopic thinking" of the dream method. Group therapy—in a dream group—provides Newell and Simon's "problem space" in which participants can experiment with alternative approaches to problem solving. The basic assumption, of course, is that the group not only offers scope to the individual to project his experiences but also together the group offers optimum creativity.

The success of dreamwork depends, ultimately, on asking the right questions and interpreting the dream symbols correctly. A solution might elude the dreamer because either the dreamer has not got to the root of the problem or has been unable to separate the real issues from the imagained ones. The case of the young executive, whose query about career advancement sets off a dream about an office party which has ostensibly nothing to do with his career, substantiates this point. A close analysis of his dream reveals an overlap between the personal and the professional—the executive's filial duties which constrain his choices and advancement—which he had not thought worth considering. The dream group helps him to get his priorities right and make his career choice accordingly. Hazarika herself guides the reader through ancient texts, including *Atharvaveda*, Tibetan wisdom and the Buddhist *Mrtyuvandvana*, for traditional interpretations of some common dreams like falling, flying, persecution, excesses and death.

The impulse behind inducting creativity in management is to gain competitive advantage in a globalised scenario where the key to success lies in innovativeness, adaptibility to change and flexibility. The obstacles to the new approach lie in the traditional mindset in organizations which believe in technological knowhow, watertight functional areas, minute specialization, excessive bureaucracy, short term focus, technological rigidities, poor nurturing of creative ideas and non-inclusion of innovation as core value. Creativity 2000 is clearly designed for organizations of the future based on the principle of interconnectedness, non-hierarchical relationships and collaboration. The paradigm is illustrated in process through the example of Engineers India Limited. The learning elements derived from the workshop corroborate Hazarika's faith in divergent thinking, right brained intelligence, subjective insights and cooperativeness. The take home element is crucial because from the outset she has harped on the practical value of dreams. Her agenda extends beyond the interpretation of dreams to explore their potential for envisioning and shaping the future. Throughout, by dwelling on the overlap between the inner and outer, she concentrates on their role in shaping reality. The test of the dream, therefore, lies in the doing. The examples provided in the text—such as the dream of the Chairman of Bongaigon Refinery in charge of Oil India Limited, about gas flares from a well which had ostensibly been written off while following routine procedures, actually comes true as gas is struck at the same site despite Barua's initial refusal to trust a flimsy dream hunch. Rationalism drove the rainmaker out of business, the crisis of reason has brought dreaming back into reckoning.

To all the doubting Thomases among readers here is a surefire recipe for creativity. Have a problem? Sleep over it like in the good old-fashioned days. Leave a note stating the problem in a phrase under your pillow. Say the phrase over and over again until sleep claims you. If you truly believe in dreams, you are likely to find a solution by the next morning. But only if you remember the dream in detail, crack the visual clues and connect with your waking reality. If you are a trained dreamer and have mastered the dream idiom, the answer to that knotty problem in only a dream away.

Anjali Hazarika is acutely conscious of having stepped into the untrodden. But the anxiety and the doubts and the exhilaration which comes with breaking new grounds communicate themselves to the reader. Can dreamwork offer a panacea to hard managerial problems? She begins in a spirit of exploration and questioning carrying the reader along with her in her quest to discover non-rational, subjective, intuitive, feminine routes to understanding.

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An Impressive Collection

Sujit Mukherjee

SELECTED LETTERS OF RABINDRANATH TAGORE

Edited by Krishna Dutta and Andrew Robinson

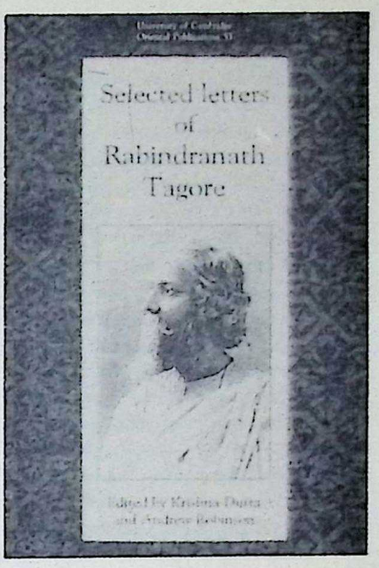
Cambridge University Press, Cambridge (U.K.), 1997, University of Cambridge Oriental Publications No. 53, pp. 561, Rs. 550.00

When Sisirkumar Das put together *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore* in three massive volumes for publication by Sahitya Akademi, he and his team decided to leave out the letters. Among the many reasons he gave, the principal one was: "Our decision to exclude the letters has not been prompted by the absence of scholarly editions but by the unavailability of the correspondence in full. In the absence of the response of one of the participants, the letters of the other are likely to be denuded of their contexts. They would appear, to use a Tagorean simile, like a bird bereft of one wing" (Introduction, III, p. 15). Dutta and Robinson have very opportunely clutched the existing wing and produced a volume of three hundred and forty-six 'selected' letters, three-quarters of which were written originally in English. I cannot remember Cambridge University Press ever having published anything of or on Rabindranath. Now they have and must immediately be congratulated for having set a price which even Indian college and university libraries can afford.

In compiling and editing this volume, Krishna Dutta and Andrew Robinson have not so much rushed in but confidently trod a territory which Professor Das not so much feared but chose not to tread. Individually as well as jointly, Robinson and Dutta bear impressive credentials for undertaking such an invasion. In 1990 they 're-translated' *Glimpses of Bengal*; in 1995 they published a new biography of the poet entitled *The Myriad-minded Man* and followed up in 1997 with *Rabindranath Tagore: An Anthology*. Earlier, on his own, Robinson had published *The Art of Rabindranath Tagore* (1989), the same year in which his book on Satyajit Ray came out), then edited the correspondence between Rabindranath and Leonard Elmhirst published under the title *Purabi* (1991). As for Krishna Dutta, she had already shared with Mary Lago the task of translating some stories of Rabindranath which appear as the volume *Selected Short Stories* (1991). Not many Rabindranath devotees of recent times can claim to have served him so voluminously.

Yet, for some reason, this duo has not earned in this country credit proportionate to their hard work. One reason could be our 'nationalist' mistrust of a foreigner like Robinson seeking to appropriate a much treasured national property. Another could be a less confined antipathy towards a rather young and unproved critic who takes on first, the films of Satyajit Ray, then the paintings of Rabindranath, and gets both books published the same year. I used to wonder which other Bengali icon Robinson would worship next—proposed Chuni Goswami as a possibility until he was dislodged by Saurav Ganguly—but Robinson had by then got sucked in by the quicksand of Rabindranath's reputation in the West. He has striven mightily to pull himself and his subject out of that mess through half a dozen books and nearly as many publishers. The commendable objective of his enterprise has been to demythify the old western view of Rabindranath as a long-bearded mystic—a wise man from the East. Yet, *Selected Letters* has been published by CUP as an addition to their list of Oriental Publications. Is this another instance of orientalism striking back?

Robinson's own reputation—and by association that of Krishna Dutta—was somewhat besmirched when, soon after the publication of their biography, they were charged by William Radice and Ketaki Kushari Dyson of having used without due acknowledgement some of the translations done by the latter. Several Sunday issues of *The Statesman* of Calcutta highlighted what was merrily described as 'a mixed-doubles match' between contestants who all live in England and have taken upon themselves the duty of redeeming Rabindranath before the western world. The context remains undecided but an impression has grown about Robinson's tendency to re-work other people's work into his own. *The Myriad-minded Man* is a good example of this method. Readable as the book is,



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it gives no evidence of new research but much proof of what is already available, albeit presented here with certain new emphases. The justification offered that this biography is meant only or mainly for western readers seems to ignore the global village—at least where the English language is concerned—we are supposed to be living in now.

The Robinson-Dutta method was first demonstrated in *Glimpses of Bengal* (1991), a title which promises to be a bibliographer's delight in days to come. Many years ago there was a *Glimpses of Bengal Life* (1913), consisting of thirteen stories of Rabindranath translated by one Rajaniranjan Sen and published by G.A. Natesan of Madras. This volume must have been practically forgotten by 1921, when Macmillan of London published *Glimpses of Bengal* consisting of letters from Rabindranath to his niece Indira during 1885–95, selected and abridged by the author, then translated into English by his nephew Surendranath. In their version, Robinson-Dutta have retained the title (the Bangla original was entitled *Chinnapatra*, meaning torn or plucked leaves) but re-translated the originals in their entirety, "dropped several . . . letters and added some new ones". Even if only three letters were dropped and four added while the deletions (made by Rabindranath) were restored, I should have thought that the effort deserved to be entitled anew—so that no confusion could be caused to those who have access to the 1913 *Glimpses* as well as to the 1921 *Glimpses*.

A very different method (bar that of retaining the old title) was followed by Robinson in his 1991 version of *My Reminiscences*. The Bangla original of this autobiographical essay, *Jibansmriti* (1912), reappeared in English translated by Surendranath Tagore as *My Reminiscences* in 1917. For its next appearance over seventy years later, Robinson has merely revised the earlier version here and there without attempting any re-translation. His decision to revive this text may also be questioned. In the original, though written around 1911–12, Rabindranath retraced his life only till about 1885. Readers in English who pick it up in its new guise will certainly expect a longer set of reminiscences than those which stop short over a hundred years ago.

Both methods have been employed in the three substantial volumes that have followed. It is most remarkable that these were published within two years of each other. This was physically possible because three different publishers were at work, and none of them could have discounted the fact that Robinson happens to be the literary editor of *The Times Higher Education Supplement*. The biography, as already mentioned, does not offer any new evidence or insight—instead, pleads that it is meant for western readers who do not know much about Rabindranath and, even if they did, cannot read him in the original. The same apology is offered for the anthology: "Readers, particularly western readers for whom this anthology is intended . ." Here, about one-third of the material chosen was written originally in English—this has been revised in little or large measure. For their latest effort, Robinson-Dutta regard "this book of letters as a companion to that book (the Biography)". In other words, this too has been tilted towards innocent (or ignorant) readers abroad.

Proof of such tilting can be seen in the proportion by which three-quarters

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of about three hundred and fifty letters included here are those that were written originally in English, "many of which remain virtually or wholly unknown, even to Tagore scholars". This must be more true of foreign scholars, especially those who have no easy access to Rabindra Bhavan archives, since about "half of the English letters in this book have not previously appeared in print". To serve readers abroad even more fully, Robinson-Dutta could have considered the option of selecting only the English letters and thereby supplemented the Sahitya Akademi volumes mentioned above.

Faced with the choice of whether to leave the letters in English exactly as Rabindranath wrote them or to correct his lapses in composition, our compiler-editors have chosen the latter approach but "altered Tagore's original *only* where the English is unclear or ambiguous". Robinson-Dutta could have taken a chance and left it to readers presumably not all less qualified than themselves to make meaning out of what Rabindranath had written. As for the Bangla letters, the compilers claim they have translated all these themselves. They do not, however, clarify whether any of these had been translated earlier and published. Forewarned by their previous practice, we would have felt relieved by such assurance. Meanwhile, the material could well form the subject for an M. Phil. dissertation or two at Visva-Bharati where most of the originals are available—(i) an examination of the 'alterations' effected in the English letters to see to what extent these have contributed to clarity and eliminated all ambiguity; (ii) an examination of the Bangla originals against existing translations, and comparison with the new translations.

In that anthology, apart from a 23-page introduction at the beginning, each section is introduced briefly. Here, after a short introduction to the volume, the editors "have chosen to provide a separate introduction to almost every letter, along with comprehensive notes. Without such individual introduction, many of the letters would be virtually meaningless, even to Tagore scholars". That is a tall claim indeed, but it does make for the most complete background information that one would require for reading a text one had not read before. Considering there are three hundred and forty-six letters in the book, the volume of such editorial matter can be imagined. In some instances, the introduction is longer than the letter it introduces.

The selected letters are arranged in chronological order—the divisions correspond roughly to the chapters of the biography—thus, reading the numerous introductions successively is like reading a condensed *The Myriad-minded Man*. Many of the letters were partially quoted, in the original or in translation, in the biography. By now offering the full texts, the editor-compilers have satisfied a curiosity which may have been aroused by the earlier work.

Not more than a quarter of "several thousand letters" Rabindranath wrote were in English and, from this quarter, about two hundred and sixty have been reproduced here. That cannot but look unbalanced as a selection. Even within this selection, a large proportion are those addressed to internationally renowned persons like Woodrow Wilson, Romain Rolland, Albert Einstein and the like. Possibly this has been done to project Rabindranath as being at one time a public figure on the world stage. Here again, the selection seems designed to impress foreign readers.

Even the Indian names mentioned in editorial commentary are those likely to be recognized abroad—Nirad C. Chaudhuri, Satyajit Ray, Anita Desai. The most extreme demonstration of this is a foreword by Amartya Sen, who is justly known the world over for his intellectual achievements—which do not, however, include any writings on Rabindranath. As this foreword betrays, there is nothing Sen has to say which was not already known. He said so at even greater length in *The New York Review of Books* last year. The editors have acknowledged "the generous assistance of Amartya Sen" but do not mention the Foreword or the NYRB article. I wonder why—wonder also which was written earlier. The frequent reference to Satyajit Ray confirms that Robinson probably holds him in high esteem as a 'Tagore scholar'. In that review of *The English Writings* cited at the outset, Robinson chided Sisir Das thus: "And it is staggering to come across not a single reference to Satyajit Ray, the great interpreter of Tagore on the screen, who has done so much to make him appealing to today's world". Which world? Whose world?—we may like to ask. As for Anita Desai, not only is *Selected Letters* dedicated to her but there is a flattering reference to her at the end of the acknowledgments. It reminds us that Robinson alone and sometime with Krishna Dutta's assistance have held Rabindranath Tagore 'in custody' for more than ten years. However, they prophesy: "This, we expect is our last book on him." I cannot easily decide whether to mourn or to celebrate.

Sujit Mukherjee wrote his doctoral dissertation on Tagore and has recently translated two of his works—Three Companions *(1992) and* Gora *(1997).*

On Yama, *Mrtyu* and the Missing Link

Purushottam Agrawal

MRTYU: CONCEPT OF DEATH IN INDIAN TRADITIONS

By Gian Giuseppe Fillipi

D.K. Printworld, New Delhi, 1996, pp. 258 + xiv, Rs. 325.00

YAMA: THE GLORIOUS LORD OF THE OTHER WORLD

By Kusum P. Merh

D.K. Printworld, New Delhi 1996, pp. 302 + xvi, Rs. 340.00

It is inevitable for any culture to formulate its stand on the phenomenon of death because of its universal certitude and consequent human obsession with its aftermath. Thus ironically a concept of death is actually a concept of life or conversely we can say that any conceptualization of mundane life is interwoven with a concept of life hereafter i.e. death! Naturally therefore, an inquiry into the concept of death in a given cultural tradition must holistically consider the concerns and issues as formulated by the epistemology of that tradition. The matter of death is too far-reaching to be methodologically confined to eschatology, as Arnold Schweitzer had noted in a slightly different context when he found Buddhist ethics lacking in lasting philosophical appeal precisely because it considered the detailed engagement with questions of death and the existence of God rather unnecessary.

Keeping the above in mind let us ask: What is unique in the Indian concept of death? How did it evolve? More importantly: what is the epistemological import for us modernists (or post-modernists, if you will), of revisiting the "Indian" (or any pre-modern) concept of death and its evolution in history? Is it only with the intention of reconstructing or glorifying the exotica of the "noble savage" that we approach the world of "mythical" (as opposed to "historical") consciousness and its manifestations in the codes and languages of rituals?

Here a digression seems to be in order.

Even without going into the question of the validity of the post-modern critique of the Enlightenment project, it has to be conceded that the Euro-centric nature of the Enlightenment and the geo-historical construct of its "Universal" rationality is a sadly incontrovertible fact, which has resulted in the othering of all that was and all that remains of non-European and non-Christian cultures. In fact the pagan cultures and world-outlooks of pre-Christian Europe were the first to suffer appropriation and even elimination at the hands of the Pauline Church and its political and intellectual establishment. Subsequently Europe as defined by this establishment became the standard by which "other" traditions and cultures were to be judged. The non-European societies were denied the existential status of being located in "History" because these societies had not, apparently, developed in accordance with the standards set by European historical progression. The most tragic (and ironic) example of this tendency is the internalization of Euro-centric arrogance even by those who intended to evolve a discourse of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. Further, even many of those who intend to study the non-European traditions "sympathetically" cannot get over the syndrome of taking Europe as the standard and wittingly or unwittingly othering the non-European traditions. Most of the time this othering no longer takes place in the classical orientalist mould. It is much subtler and in many cases a result of the inattentive internalization of the arrogant rationality of the "Enlightenment". Such internalization leads to serious problems of perspective and methodology.

This unfortunately is the case with both books under review. Before we discuss them in detail let us ask another question or the same question a bit differently. What kind of inquiry should lead us to the study of so-called traditional societies and their ways of conceptualizing various experiences? Ob-

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viously this question is valid only in the context of studies which intend to go beyond the "manual" or compendium format. Since both Gian G. Fillipi and Kusum P. Merh as serious scholars have embarked upon a comprehensive treatment of the subject matter, the question of the perspective of the enquirer is relevant. After all, the perspective defines the contours of the scholarly imagination—a necessary ingredient of any worthwhile research.

It is the limitation of this imagination which prompts Fillipi to start with the astonishing statement, "Accepted with what westerners would define as an attitude of fatalism, it (death) is considered a natural event, a part of life, *just like poverty, sickness and old age*" (p. 1, emphasis added). It is quite true that Indian tradition, on a certain plane considers death as a natural fact of life, but it is really too much to draw the conclusion which Fillipi draws. In fact, the realization of the dialectics of life and death is one thing and the so-called fatalism is quite another, to mix them up is to actually subscribe to the worst kind of orientalist prejudice, which simply ignores the fact of the "fatalist" Indian tradition having evolved the discourses of health-care, state-craft and also of carnal pleasure along with that of death.

The uniqueness of the Indian concept of death can be addressed more meaningfully if the essentialist generalizations of the kind mentioned above are carefully avoided. This would naturally lead to a more cautious use of the very term "Indian", as its use sometimes entails a hegemonic implication. Fillipi makes it clear at the outset that by "Indian" he actually means "Contemporary Hinduism" (p. 2) so far as his study is concerned. Then why not use this phrase itself? The related problem is the fact that the author mainly uses the text of the *Garuḍa-Purāṇa* to describe the rituals of this contemporary Hinduism, which is alright, provided the caste, community and region specificities of the rites and rituals are given due weightage. This is not the case here. Besides being a methodological lapse, it once again reflects the more basic problem of perspective.

Undoubtedly both the books are written with scholarly meticulousness, in fact that is precisely why the lack of provocative imagination becomes even more conspicuous in both the books. To give an example, Fillipi rightly notes that,

"It has been said that in India death (*mṛtyu*) is not opposed, as it is in the West, to the idea of life (jivan) but rather to birth (jāti). This statement is indeed intriguing and contributes to present with indelible colours the picture of the beliefs that have been shared on this topic—and today still are—by the people of the subcontinent. Nevertheless, such a statement, due to an excessive schematism, appears too generic, since the points of view which have developed over the centuries are many and complex" (pp. 5–6).

The eschatology rooted in prophetic epistemology conceptualizes death as a horrible 'evil' necessarily opposed to the 'good' of life, while the Hindu and other pagan traditions, even though appreciating the sorrow and loss associated with death, seek to conceptualize it in a much more subtle and multilayered fashion.

One would naturally expect, with such an opening, some effort at grappling with the "complex" points of view. Instead, one finds the author himself contributing to the "indelible colours" of the "picture", an inevitable outcome of just describing the varied rituals without giving much thought to dealing with their import and significance, that too with excessive dependence on one particular text.

In this context, it is indeed surprising that neither Fillipi nor Merh mention the *Srimadbhagvat Gita* even once! Or, given the nature of perspective of the authors, probably it is not! After all, the *Gita* neither contributes to the description of Yama's personality nor to the rites and rituals of death! But the fact remains that the very idea of the *Gita* is so imaginative and in the context of present discussion, so instructive that its exclusion is bound to be noticed. The reason is profoundly simple. To the author, more accurately to the tradition of *Mahabharata*, the *Gita* was necessitated by the fear and repulsion of death, not of one's own but that of the near and dear ones (which makes its text more poignant and the context more humane). Moreover this text to a large extent epitomizes the mind of the tradition whose "concept" of death and whose "glorious lord of the other world" is sought to be studied by Fillipi and Merh respectively.

As a matter of fact the uniqueness of the mind of this tradition lies in its unfamiliarity with the idea of a neat division between good and evil. Consequently it does not counterpose death in a schematic fashion either to the idea of life or to that of birth. On the contrary the *Jaminiopanishad Brahman* maintains that, "Man dies thrice. First when he is placed in the mother's womb by the father's semen; second when he is initiated into yajna and third when his corpse is placed on the pyre." (3/2/4–2,5,7,11). Relate this with the fascinating imagination of Yama being the brother of Manu and of being the first to be sacrificed! This is noted by Merh but typically without going into its import or relating it with the kind of philosophical abstractions mentioned above. In order to appreciate the Indic concept of death, it is absolutely crucial to understand that this myth is concretizing the abstract concept of life and death being interwoven, by isomorphing the world of human existence as Manu and its nemesis as Yama. The very provenance of the word 'Yama' points in this direction only.

Interestingly, the idea implicit in this myth is common to many pagan traditions. It is unique only in comparison with the prophetic religions, and in its fuller and more complex unfolding in the Indian wisdom. The pagan idea of the first Man and his death being "brothers" has been extensively researched. We need not go into this at present. Suffice it to note that the idea of Yama being brother of Manu and being generous enough to become the first one to die was first discarded by the founder of the first Prophetic Religion—Zarathustra.

The eschatology rooted in prophetic epistemology conceptualizes death as a horrible 'evil' necessarily opposed to the 'good' of life, while the Hindu and other pagan traditions, even though appreciating the sorrow and loss associated with death, seek to conceptualize it in a much more subtle and multilayered fashion. This leads to the 'trinity' of Yama, Mrtyu and *Nirṛiti* being replaced later on by Kala. Merh duly notes the evolution of this trinity. The elaborate and time-consuming rituals of death naturally reflect the complexity of the concept which is at the root of moving "human solidarity" of "so many people taking turns in distracting the family of the deceased from their sorrows" (Fillipi, p. 145).

Unfortunately, such flashes of insight are not many, because both the authors have (perhaps unwittingly) allowed their perspective to be heavily tinted by the Euro-centric epistemology and the prophetic dichotomy between good and evil. To be fair to them, our authors only typically represent the widespread trend that leads to the 'ordering' and 'othering' of non-European cultures and non-prophetic religions, sometimes, intentionally and sometimes inspite of the best intentions. The scholars and researchers start looking for the parallels between the 'standard' i.e. Europe and the 'object' of study. Examples are too many; from the 'monotheism' in the Vedas to 'humanism' in medieval Bhakti poetry! The extent of this parallelism becomes painfully clear when Merh translates the term *apauruṣeya* in the context of the Vedas as "not composed by men". The fact of the matter is that in this context *Puruṣa* stands not for man but for "God" himself, which means that the Vedas are on an equal footing with God instead of being 'composed' by Him. This is obviously different from the idea of some text having not men but God as its author and to be sure this difference is not just rhetorical but has serious epistemological as well as ontological implications. A serious research-work is expected to be sensitive to such crucial differences.

This review might sound rather harsh, but it is not intended to be. Undoubtedly both Fillipi and Merh have followed the tenets of meticulous research. The irony lies in this meticulousness not being complimented by a similar rigor at the level of perspective. This becomes rather striking in the case of Fillipi because of the overly ambitious sub-title of his book. After all, one expects something more than the description of rites and rituals as detailed in the *Garuḍa-Purāṇā* when the subtitle of the book happens to be "concept of death in Indian traditions".

To repeat, there are insightful observations here and there in both the books, sadly left just like that. Two examples should suffice. Merh gives a detailed account of Yama's image as 'creator' (pp. 112–119), but does not bother to ponder over the implications of the "glorious lord of the other world" being visualized as the "creator". Even more disconcerting is the example from Fillipi, who notes, "For the Indian, human individuality is composite and multiple, as has been amply demonstrated in this study" (p. 183). This reviewer, however failed to see the 'demonstration', for the simple reason that the crucial link between the 'multiplicity' of individuality and the multivocality of the "Indian traditions" is completely missing in Fillipi's study.

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Strong On Craft, Low On Propaganda

Shobhana Bhattacharji

THE PARDON OF SAINT ANNE

By William Palmer

Vintage, London, 1997, pp: 252, UK £6.99 (paperback)

The Pardon of Saint Anne: A novel in three parts.
Place: Germany and France.
Time: 1932 to a little after D-Day.

Part One: A spa near Coblenz. First person narrative by Walther, an aspiring photographer, son of a missing-presumed-dead German father and an English mother, brother of future Hitler Youth fanatic, nephew of Karl who lives in Berlin amid beautiful pictures, the beautiful people, and beautiful young men.

Part Two: Berlin. Also first person narrative by Walther, now an efficient photographer, canny about light, shadow and angles. Hitler becomes Chancellor, Röhm is purged, SS replaces the SA, Crystal Night (pretty, lying description for violent attacks on Jewish homes and offices by SS who smashed up Jewish establishments) occurs. Karl is murdered because he is a "pervert." Walther's wealthy grandmother dies. He gets a job as photographer for a magazine with the help of a photographer hero of his youth.

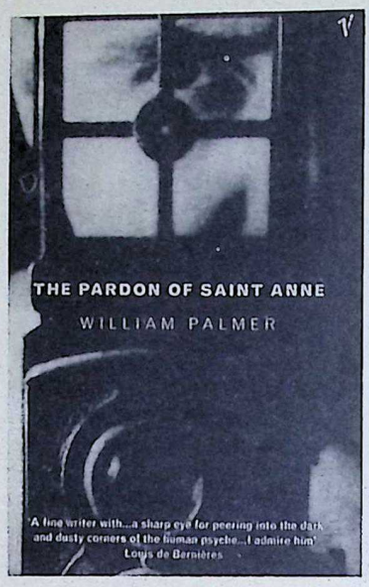
Part Three: A German camp on the beaches of Normandy just before D-Day. Third person narrative. All soldiers at this camp are medically unfit for active service. Walther, for example, is partially deaf from a bomb blast. Another man is obsessed with proving that Jesus was not a Jew but Nordic and that St. Anne, Jesus' maternal grandmother, came from a village near their camp. A third has been on the Russian front and has a secret cache of photographs of the terrible killings there. Why does he have them? Is he critical of German brutality? Is he merely obsessive about mass killings? The French Resistance has its own ideas about the photographs, as Walther learns to his horror soon after D-Day. These medically disabled men are supposed to make survey maps paintings and photographs of the area.

Without the rigid structure of the well made play, historical detail alone would have run *The Pardon of Saint Anne* ragged. Readers are expected to know Hitler's Germany and know it well. It isn't enough to be familiar with what the SS and SA were but also how the Nazis plotted their course to an opposition-free Germany, eliminating gays, Communists, and Jews in sequence and not simultaneously, as Palmer makes very clear. Walther's life bumps against all of this, more than once embroiling him completely.

A second "dialogue" in the novel is between Palmer and Christopher Isherwood, a formidable predecessor for anyone attempting a novel of Nazi Berlin. The second paragraph of Isherwood's "Berlin Diary of 1930" in *Goodbye to Berlin* (1930) opens with "I am a camera." Palmer could have pretended that Isherwood's Berlin novels didn't exist. Instead, he acknowledges Isherwood by making his protagonist a photographer. The thoughtful passages on the role of the artist in society alone make *The Pardon of Saint Anne* well worth reading.

Walther thinks that a photographer has only to record all he sees because the camera cannot lie. His one aesthetic indulgence is sharp lines. At the end of January 1933, the week that Hitler became chancellor of Germany, Walther is told by a socialist acquaintance that he'd better take it easy on those clean modernist lines because they are likely to get him into trouble with the Nazis. With faith in his camera and the obtuseness of youth, he cannot believe that art too is a political target. And yet, in what are astonishingly Isherwood-like opening passages (diary, camera), he says that jazz was banned by the Nazis. He also notes that as camera technology improved, his photographs had clearer details, and still he believes that the camera does not lie.

Contradictions of this sort are not peculiar to Walther nor of course, to fictional characters. Palmer's point is that it may take harsh experience for



Huge parts of the novel are about a question that is asked but inadequately answered. How did Germans allow the Holocaust and its attendant horrors? Daniel Goldberg's controversial *Hitler's Willing Executioners* is one sort of answer, Hannah Arendt's commentary on the Eichmann trial another. Trying to answer the question is an industry in itself.

the contradictions to straighten out but by then individuals have contributed to wider social anarchy by simply shutting themselves—in this case—to a political agenda. Things are seen to exist in separate compartments. Jews, communists, gays, cabarets—each seemed a different sort of ban when in fact it was a single fearsome censorship.

To return for a spell to Isherwood's "I am a camera." Isherwood's Berlin novels extend from 1930 to 1939 when he left Germany. What else could he do but record the terrifying slide in very few days from happy, amoral Berlin to censored, unidimensional Nazi rule? He could see the change but not, at the time, its aftermath or its hidden processes. Fifty-five years on, Palmer has the advantage of freer speech and can talk of gays, for instance, as Isherwood could not. Ishwerwood avoided reference to his sexuality in his writing wrote of it in the third person until think, *Christopher and His Kind* (1977). could not, therefore, write of the specific fear of gays in Hitler's Germa whereas Palmer has a major event, death of Karl, around this in his nov

Palmer's literary plottin (Isherwood, the well made play etc) unobtrusive and encourages one discover things the author has not s but which are present all the same. F example, mulling over Walther's almo coldblooded response to Karl's murde one is reminded of the terrible tru voiced in Nazi Germany that un "they" came for "me," individuals d not consider the elimination of enti groups to be "my" problem. Is th another foundation of the novel?

Whether it is or not, the point is th *The Pardon of Saint Anne* does not rel on firework-fantasy but uses actu events and simple yet devastating pa terns (historical facts, the exempl story, the well made play). Post-mo ernists could learn much from hi Palmer, too, jumps from one narrati voice to another, one time to anothe and his novel seems to flit by in a seri of images. But he never loses sight that unfashionable creature, a gran narrative.

Palmer also has the advantage information. He can tell us about t building of the concentration camp for instance, which Isherwood may have known about. They were bui with every detail of how and where t hideous deaths would be conducte Dachau and the other concentrati camps began to open in 1933:

> for the straightening-out of the ne regime's enemies. For, make nomi take, just like the design of the u forms and the shadow offices an ministries and who should occup them these places had also bee planned; the sites chosen, th buildings designed for their ne purpose long ago. Every detail their tormenting regimes had be worked out, down to the calculate inadequacy of diets, the degrees punishments, the insufficient leng of bunk and thinness of blanket, t coarse uniforms, the badges for ea grade of prisoner—all these had be urgently and fondly discussed a laid out with much hilarity drinking sessions in cellars and bar

It was hardly possible that the Golgothas were created without th knowledge of people living around th areas. What did Germans think th camps were being built for? Why wa there no protest? No significant action

Huge parts of the novel are about

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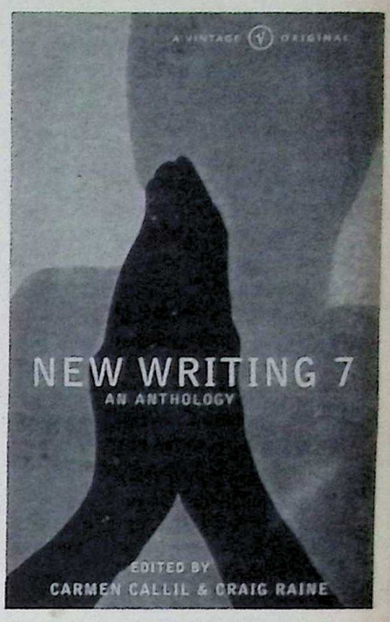
Never A Dull Moment

Smita Agarwal

NEW WRITING 7: AN ANTHOLOGY
Edited by Carmen Callil and Craig Raine
Vintage in association with The British Council, U.K., 1998, pp. x+417, £7.99



We've had our five big blasts in Pokharan: India is chock-full of attitude. My staunch Hindu friend says reading anthologies like *New Writing 7* stinks of the colonial hangover and cultural imperialism, especially since the Preface proclaims that this annual anthology (founded in 1992) will "occasionally" accept contributions from English language writers of non-British nationality "if, they contribute to [the] aim" of presenting "a multi-faceted picture of modern Britain." I reply, as a struggling, if not failed, writer in English it's my interest to find out what's happening at the level of ideas and technique in English language writing in any corner of the world.

It surprises me why neither *New Writing 6 nor New Writing 7*, feature Indian writers in English. Is it because work from them wasn't solicited or are they not aware of this forum? *New Writing 5* did include a chilling short story titled "Ravi Shastri" by Nalinaksha Bhattacharya. The story had nothing to do with the idea of presenting "a multi-faceted picture of modern Britain" though it did have a lot to do with cricket. A second lieutenant researching on the Lepchas once told me that, like polo, cricket too is a variation of a regional game played somewhere in North East India, and, it does have startling similarities with gilli-danda! Now, how did Mr. Bhattacharya get past that competent and formidable lady, Dr. Harriet Harvey Wood? Good writing, of course.

There isn't a trace of dullness in *New Writing 7*. It's recommended as, for the price, you get variety—poetry, short story, drama, essays, film scripts and extracts from novels in progress. The writing isn't new in the sense of it being pathbreaking or breakthrough, but, it's new in the sense of it being the latest from a crop of very few new (two or three) and the rest, established writers.

Despite Ted Hughes not being aware of my existence, I read up a lot of him and fantasized a lot about him while pursuing a D. Phil. on Sylvia Plath. Hughes' voice and vision are as strong and sharp as they've always been. The fusion of the natural and the human world in poems like "Brother Peartree" and "The Coat" show that the magic of his writing is intact, though, if you really wanna go wah-wah over Hughes' powers of observation and description do read up a poem called "Eclipse."

Bernard O'Donoghue's poetic voice is as level as the man I met reading his poems in Cambridge. The poems are enjoyable because they're sober poems with a twist.

A good read is the lengthy mixed-media, "The Pleasure Dome" by Ian McEwan. It has the makings of a successful TV serial with bits of "The X-Files" on Star TV, "Johnny Quest" on Cartoon Network and good old James Hadley Chase thrown in and whipped up. The writing is both nerve-racking and addictive like Ecstasy, or Viagra perhaps? After a good high "The Pleasure Dome" ends tamely with a paean for the therapeutic powers of pleasure and another, more subtle one, for the cautionary powers of art.

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New Writing 7 has a section called Extracts from novels in progress. Matthew Kneale's "English Passengers" with its joky prankish world of seafaring peddlars and pushers took me back to Robert Louis Stevenson. Stevie White's short extract, "Blind Solomon" works well because of its pace and dialogue.

In the short story section, Lucy Ellman and Matthew Singh-Toor use the letter to unfold their stories while Philip Kerr uses the review to tell his tale. I must confess that I read, "Squirrel Man Mac" because of the writer's odd name. In India, a Christian-Sardar name is a rarity. "Squirrel Man Mac" is an intricately told simple tale of the discovery of sexual happiness. Matthew Singh-Toor uses the epistolary technique proficiently though, I wonder, how much of it suggested itself to the writer and how much of it he contrived. The writing reveals the dispossession brought on by immigration, as also, a mind disoriented by the "task [of] assimilating the marvellous yet shocking revelations" made to the protagonist during his stay in Sowhaddhi Khas, Punjab, India. Born woman and trained to get the hots only for the Amitabh Bachchans and the Leonardo di Caprios, for years I failed to understand how men could find sexual fulfillment within their sex; until I read a small pink pamphlet published for private circulation only, titled *Less Than Gay*. It changed me.

Louis de Bernieres has previously, appeared in *New Writing 6*. *"Mamacita's Treasure" is of interest to the Indian reader when de Bernieres describes the sweltering heat and a dotty* grandmotherly woman who's able to negotiate a canny deal by describing a feature and distance on a map as, "... that is a rock that looks like

question that is asked but inadequately answered. How did Germans allow the Holocaust and its attendant horrors? Daniel Goldberg's controversial *Hitler's Willing Executioners* is one sort of answer, Hannah Arendt's commentary on the Eichmann trial another. Trying to answer the question is an industry in itself.

Palmer is interested in the relatively ordinary person's part in making Nazi Germany. Walther's ideal of uncommitted art is as much responsible as Karl's comment that "these people" (the SA) would become anarchic without "our" control even as he stuffs money into an SA man's extended box. The SA, of course, merely paved the way for the SS or the "new police" who are suddenly everywhere. Equally suddenly, the SA vanishes. Karl, Walther, and other Berliners do not know that the SA has been slaughtered overnight.

Karl believed his important friends would help him but once Hitler becomes chancellor, friends transmogrify into spies. Karl is murdered by the SS.[1]

Walther is all wrong. Merely recording events is not much use. He says that 1933 "was the time for all liberal foolishness to be put aside," but goes on to say that he avoided the new concentration camps. He preferred to record less dangerous truths with his camera.

Recently, I heard school children debate on terrorism.[2] The winners argued that negotiation is superior to violence as a way of ending terrorism, a major form of which, they said, was state terrorism. They spoke much sense. But what does one do if there is no forum for negotiation? If no opposition is permitted? Obviously, such a situation should not be allowed to come into existence. That, rather than the disaffection which the debates said should be rooted out, is the point we need to begin the fight at.

The Pardon of Saint Anne is strong on craft, low on propaganda, respects history, and is proof that the intelligent novel is far from dead. It is also relevant to India today.

1. It would be nice to know why the SA collected money all the time. Isherwood has a sequence on it in *Goodbye to Berlin*. Palmer has one in his novel. But the expert on Hitler's Germany whom I consulted hadn't a useful explanation.
2. Slater Memorial Debate, Bishop Cotton School, Shimla.

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a man... and this is about the length of a lemon tree's shadow an hour before sunset."

Among the essays included in the anthology Karl Miller's "Autobiographical Intents" treads the razor's edge of fiction and autobiography. Autobiography has become an issue in contemporary writing and Booker Prize judges have to spend time deciding whether a short-listed novel is a novel or a memoir, that is, whether it is fiction or non-fiction.

Blake Morrison's two books, *And When Did You Last See Your Father* and *As If*, the more recent one about the murder of the two year old James Bulger, have been seen as "intruded" autobiography. Miller feels that just as in the *genre* of the novel, a novel can be both realistic and romantic, likewise, in the *genre* of autobiography "boundary-crossing" is possible. The trick is to do it well like Homer did by making the *Odyssey* both epic and romance. When I read pieces like "Autobiographical Intents" I get the nagging feeling that with so much adept boundary-crossing and the enabling breaking down of categories, is the English Department critic becoming *passé*?

I'm sure British writers are excited that the British Council's Literature Department has responded "to the strong interest in the newest British writing overseas" and has had the verve and the energy to provide them with this forum. In late 1996, the British Council's Literature Department in New Delhi sent out circulars to Indian writers in English inviting them to write for a similar sort of a compilation which would "reflect Indian and British views of Modern India, independent since 1947." The circular claimed that "a publishing house with a strong presence in world book trade [would] be responsible for promotions." I wonder, what happened to the venture? Petered out like the "high-mortality-rate" Indian-English Poetry?

Smita Agarwal is a writer. A selection of her poems appears in Nine Indian Women Poets, *Oxford University Press*

Vibrant Cameos

Anupama Prabhala Kapse

THE VIRGIN SYNDROME: A NOVEL

By Rani Dharker

Penguin India, 1997, pp. 196, Rs. 200.00

Indian English fiction, it is generally agreed, has found its niche in the global market. But one wonders how much business Rani Dharker's *The Virgin Syndrome* will do in India. What else can one expect from a clumsy and tasteless pot-pourri of Salman Rushdie, Arundhati Roy, Githa Hariharan and Shobha De'?

What then is the *Virgin Syndrome*? A novel, as the subtitle seems compelled to tell us. A sheltering yet threatening presence dominating the lives of the many women of the novel; mothers, aunts, grand-aunts, grandmothers, cousins, friends, and goddesses: "The Virgin Syndrome is the obsessive desire to remain a virgin—not to be confused with frigidity—. . . it ran in our veins, bled when we bled... It governed our laughter, turned on our tears.' Given such a topos, the rite of passage of the unnamed heroine could well translate into the question. 'To be a feminist. . . or not to be?' To be, of course, is the politically correct answer. The plot then takes a predictable turn to demonstrate the acquiring of such an identity by its heroine. And shouldn't love provide the fertile space to play out the drama of this virtuous quest? So she is plunged headlong into an affair with a Kashmiri student leader at college, which, to use a phrase of the author, 'positively reeks' of the Shobha Des, inspite of riders such as 'Raina gave me an impatient push and I was lying on the bed, spread-eagled, the feminist, horizontal, post-modernist version of the crucifixion' which just makes the prose hopelessly tangled. And then we are told that inspite of Raina's sexual failure, she gets pregnant because of his enterprising sperm: 'Thus for the second time in the history of mankind there was the Immaculate Conception.'

Next, an abortion, supervised by her mother and the matriarch of the house, Aima, ensures that the pregnancy is terminated by the administering of various "hot foods", especially *til* laddoos made for Sankrant. Incredibly, at twenty-five, it is only through *Life* magazine that the heroine finds out how pregnancy occurs. Worse, only at the operation table, in stirrups for curetting does she realize that she must have been pregnant. Such an experience is explosive fictional material, but Dharker's prose is unimaginative, the humour *passé* and the handling of the plot perfunctory. Neither does she explore adequately questions of gender, and the repression of sexuality which lurk beneath the surface or even the implication of female infanticide here (all the women in her family are cursed to deliver only female children). Her discursive tendencies are so strong and the language so turgid, that the plot continues to unfold in an assembly-line fashion, the next issue being marriage. 'Like all Indian girls. . . like Alice in Wonderland, through Lacan's mirror to the Symbolic order, I thought that I would get married the minute I finished my M.A." More contrivances of the plot follow. The heroine teaches at a school, works as a copywriter in an ad agency, burns fur coats, turns vegetarian, doesn't smoke or drink, doesn't have affairs with married men, and waits for love, all with unfaltering crusading zeal.

In doing so, Dharker dabbles with the alienation of a westernized Indian in a provincial school whose academic staff is pompous, corrupt and ritual-ridden; a campus novel atmosphere, clearly drawing from her own experiences as a teacher of English Literature; and with the glitzy, unequal, yet glamourous world of Bombay. To add to all this, there are frequent attempts at fabulism, magic and realism (sic), stories of witches and lesbians, tales from Indian mythology; of Shiva and Parvati, Radha and Krishna, and the disjunctive Memories of Siddharth whose explanation is withheld until much later. There is frequent capitalization, dropping of punctuation marks and conflation of nouns. In between, there are 'Seven Conversations and One Story', a 'U.P. Dowry Formula', 'The Strange Case of Dr. Singhal and Mrs. Mayid: The Hunchback of Singledoom'; these strategies of narrative, instead of layering it, merely make it a poor pastiche. Far more enriching is the account of 'The Virgin Bride [who] Turns into Good Widow'; Rukmabai, a revolutionary doctor and cause celebre of the reform movement in late nineteenth century Maharashtra, but who had donned the widow's white inspite of never having lived with her husband. This complements a moving account of her own aunt Sumitramami's violent marital life and the conventional widowhood after that. Dharker's aunts and uncles are refreshingly real in comparison with the flat cardboard characters of the outside world. There is an Aunt-Who-Has-All-The-Answers, a Favourite Aunt, the narrow-minded Laxmimami, the pathetic Nirmalamama who wants to be perpetually young and models herself after the MTV generation and the mad aunt Dolly who gets electrocuted in trying to purify a switch. Then there are the kindly Yashwantmama with a twinkle in his eye, the cynical philistine Dinankarmama and his quarrelling wife Narmadamami, the wife-beating Rajeshmama and his long-suffering wife Sumitramami, and the inauspicious widow, grand-aunt Pandhrimami, whose name means the colour white and who brings death wherever she goes, all vibrant cameos who form a psychological backdrop to the heroine's consciousness. One would have liked to see more of them.

For all these stylistic attempts which are hardly innovative, reading *The Virgin Syndrome* is a largely cold and insipid experience. However hard it tries to distinguish itself from other Indian writing in English, it lacks a cohesive emotional core. Key episodes relating to the heroine's attempts to come to terms with her own sexuality are hopelessly obvious even as Dharker struggles to bring new depth and dimensions to her. Supposedly, the *til gud* death of the heroine's unborn child triggers off her adult life. But the link between her experiences as a schoolteacher and her experiences as a woman is a facile one. Witness one such episode. At the school, when girls between the ages of thirteen and sixteen suddenly mysteriously begin hiccupping, shivering, and faint, it is only the heroine who can see through it: 'It's so plain... It's not witchcraft at all. It's just a strange case of sexual awakening. . . You remember the screaming girls in *The Crucible*? Dancing naked in the woods? . . . repression can take all kinds of strange forms'. Enter the spirit slayer to deflect all such evil, and you have the occult of the orient thrown in for good measure, passing off as the oppressive

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cultural presence of Hindu rituals. And later there is Chhaya Shastri, another weirdo concocted by overflowing creative juices, to tell her that she is cursed by a husband from a previous birth, and that the only way for her is through faithful bathing with milk and water of the Shiva lingam.

Needless to say, she resigns from her first job. Anxious to exorcise Raina's sexual failure and her own frigidity, she rejects the town for the city, in search of freedom. On her way, in a classic re-enactment of the damsel in distress situation, she is rescued by the 'Adonis' Shyam Gupta and falls for him, after causing a near accident in trying to rescue chicken headed for slaughter. 'Mea culpa', she apologizes for her own sexual desire. Here, the binary opposition between 'good' and 'freak' women siphons off other forms of female resistance. Morever, the cliched and Hindi film style rendition of the affair with a boy 'who does not respect girls who do' avoids alternative feminine ideals. If Shyam Gupta, the engineer way down the U.P. dowry list, wasn't bad enough, Bombay is a Medusa city, 'a city of erections, hard cash its orgasm'. Her workplace is full of lecherous, insensitive men who want her to con consumers into buying yummy pork. Her home is the Y.W.C.A. hostel, and her roommate a British girl with an Indian fiance, a girl whose strangeness is accentuated by her having 'no breasts but scars'. And then there is Prema, a high class call-girl, who is engaged to be married, but searches for money and fun. It seems that nothing can be normal anymore.

Unable to sell yummy pork, she becomes a lecturer of English, and waxes eloquent on everything from politics, women, postcoloniality, population and copulation, not to mention the sorry state of the academia. Her actions speak even louder than her words. She tries to save her cousin from a forced marriage only to be told to mind her own business. At a seminar she fights tooth and nail for a clean bathroom for her colleagues with no thanks from them and acquires the label of a dangerous feminist. She fasts to help a colleague against the oppression of the V.C. only to lose her job. She tries to stop a riot in the old city, only to be hit on the head.

Again, promising material for the exploration of a self that tries to break out of love, marriage and family, the traditional co-ordinates of female identity, but again frittered away by the author. The problem is that Dharker is unable to differentiate between her own internalization of popular icons and stereotypes and her heroine's. Hence what could have been a valuable tool for exploring her heroine's neurosis

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crumbles under its own rhetoric, unable to keep up its ambitious project of unravelling the awakening and the acquisition of selfhood of its heroine. The promising opening line 'The day I fell on the pavement, and sat back on my haunches, peering at my toenails, I knew I had changed', raises expectations that Dharker is unable to sustain. In spite of her attempts to be different, the heroine is reduced to playing out a repertoire of conventional female mannerisms: a longing for Krishna, unhappiness and failure in love, crying in Siddharth's arms, being propositioned by men. What is even more problematic is her constant self-objectification as the golden-hued abundantly endowed desirable female, couched in a language derived from popular romantic fiction, soap operas and T.V. advertisements, the very institutions the novel onstensibly seeks to critique. Not only does the novel fight shy of adequately answering questions like 'What is the nature of happiness for a single unmarried Indian woman in contemporary India?', it also cuts us off frequently from the protagonist's subjectivity through its breathless sequencing of event after event. Each episode is given equal weight and not much substance, characters move aimlessly in and out of the narrative, which in trying to be audacious ends up as excessive. The discourse of the popular clutters up a much more flowing and textured symbolic discourse of Aima's tapestry of the world and its associated network of images and tropes such as the Curse and the Great Flood.

Aima's tapestry of the world is a welcome antidote to the arid landscape of the rest of the novel. She weaves, swinging to and fro, motifs from the world of nature: flowers, animals, birds. The to and fro motion of her swing is an evocative metaphor for the closeness she enjoys with cyclical time; it is both static and kinetic. Aima's portrait is indeed memorable and enjoys pride of place in the novel. Her elevated position on the swing provides glimpses of her tranquility and her closeness to ancient wisdom. Dignified yet frail, wise but trapped by tradition, loved and hated, a stalwart of a lost world, she is both victim and vehicle of the Virgin Syndrome. Yet, here, too, Dharker is controlled by rather than in control of her work. A potentially rich subtext of rebellion and vindication, which would have augured well for Dharker's feminist agenda, is left untapped. For Aima hardly ever speaks, she only says *nako*. While this is a resonant signifier of negation, loss and the denial of a rapidly changing world, it also effectively silences her, foreclosing material and historical spaces, links and breakages with the past which would have enhanced the rewriting of selfhood. Aima is, metonymically, Aashiyana, the *wada*, the stone mansion at the centre of the town, an upper-caste, upper-class inheritance. It protects but also imprisons her family of daughters. Its exclusivity exerts a pervasive pressure on the novel, so much so that not much else can be permitted into it. Nevertheless, the blood spots around which Aima embroiders flowers speak of pain and suffering faced after early widowhood. They are ample metaphors of silence and its creative use.

Fittingly, it is this aspect of Aima which the protagonist identifies most with. She has tried and rejected many careers. Besides, 'men leave [her] cold now'. What she likes is to do now is to draw trees, of various hues, contours and sizes, but only trees, as silent as Aima's tapestry. Dharker delivers with ease here, almost as if she too is equally disenchanted with the written word or the labyrinth of language, and chooses a quiet, unostentatious style. It eases the burden of the plot; the trees provide soccour, fulfillment and an identity the protagonist quests. However, it is a temporary hiatus. Transformed, she now finds the Siddharth of her memories, who presents her with an exquisite fibre-glass tree, the kind she would have loved to make. Sadly, this elegantly written strand of narrative is lost as the abstract artistic passion is subsumed by the increasingly trite vocabulary of love and romantic longing for a younger man, and the world of Mick Jagger and Princess Margaret, Elizabeth Taylor and Larry Fortenky, and Samuel Johnson and Elizabeth Porter, all rolled into one, crashes back into the text. Dharker is unable to steer her fiction away from a conventional closure of love. This is identity predicated on romantic union, although it avoids marriage. But it remains only that.

But *The Virgin Syndrome* does not leave the reader here. Instead, there is a great Fire which consumes Aashiyana, putting an end to the vile machinations of uncles and aunts trying to sell it off at a high premium. Add to this the death of MammaDaddy in a car crash and the rebirth of the heroine is complete. Nothing short of a total break with the past will ensure it. 'I walked through the fire. The flames parted for me, making a path. . .' The world, which was saved from the Great Flood, can no longer resist the new forces which drive it. The benign presence of MammaDaddy, inspite of their desire to accommodate the new, can no longer survive. The tapestry of the world burns the fastest, the embers flying in her face. There is no grandfather, no mermaid to rescue it. The new world provides choices for its women, but only at the cost of an orgy of destruction. The burden of tradition is gone, and so is the benevolent protection of patriarchy. However, if this is a myth of creation, then the new India has to be rejected, for Siddharth lives in London where she must go, choosing the expatriate alternative. Dharker hurries the heroine to fulfillment having waited the entire length of the novel. In her anxiety to provide a happy ending, she suppresses disturbing elements which threaten to destabilize her fiction. Consequently, she writes an involved account of the courtship and the fire in quick succession, pushing the novel to its climax, but makes no subjective connections between these momentous sequences. In the end, there is no happiness or loss but a telling emptiness produced by a floundering sensibility.

Perhaps it were these very elements which contributed to the nomination of *The Virgin Syndrome* for the Commonwealth Writers' Prize in the Best First Novel category. But the framework of fable, myth, ritual, exotic locale, and *bhasha* words must be used judiciously by Indian English fiction, else it runs the risk of being cheapened by its own cultural and artistic foundations. One expects more from Dharker in her next venture than what the Penguin publishing machine has produced.

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Nascent Modernity

Vibha S. Chauhan

HYENA AND OTHER SHORT STORIES

By Chitra Mudgal. Translated from the Hindi by Deepa Aggarwal

Ocean Books, Delhi, 1998, pp. 165, Rs. 225.00

Chitra Mudgal's short stories present a close view of the north Indian countryside. Perhaps because she writes in Hindi and her reader is less urbanized than that of writers in English. The stories in *Hyena and Other Short Stories* cover a large social and geographical panorama—from villages and towns of Uttar Pradesh to the metropolitan cities of Delhi and Bombay. While many of her characters speak in *Khhadi-boli*, Chitra also uses the local dialect of each place, especially where the village is a component. This nativity in language substantially contributes to the creatively eloquent regional-cultural nuances in some stories in the collection under review. That also makes the translator's job indefinitely more daunting. Deepa Aggarwal, the translator, is bold enough to take up the task.

Chitra Mudgal raises questions more than she gives answers—or perhaps even attempts to answer. Taken as a whole, the stories in the present collection encompass two separate worlds—the rural and the metropolitan-urban, seemingly of the last three decades. These have also been the decades when social change acquired a faster pace, and yet remained decisively conditioned by the stubbornness of old social relations and norms. The consequent coexistence of the old and the new and its inevitable tensions and conflicts get crystallized in Chitra Mudgal's stories. She identifies the narrow domain of change, and at the same time traces out the unchanging assumptions about morality and ethics. She brings out the conventional perception of how individuals ought to play their social roles. Within this, she manages not to overlook the unquestioned acceptance of inequalities, or exploitation of the weak and the vulnerable. Such perceptions are held almost equally by those who still nourish fragments of pre-modern ideology along with flashes of modernity—those who belong to what, in absence of an adequate term, may be called the "middle class".

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In stories like "Pret" "Yoni", "Stepney", "Promotion", "The Matter Won't End Here", "Hunger" and "The Tiger", Chitra Mudgal turns her gaze towards the twilight zone of urban life, where modernization with its concomitant quality of individual dignity becomes at times a mere superficial gloss. It corrodes like rusted iron when brought in contact with the light of new influences that threaten to modify the basic orthodox foundations of society. This conjunction of two modes of contradictory yet coexisting mindsets results in a violence that tears down the veneer of apparent equality and human dignity of the individual—the two accepted pillars of modernity.

Stories like "Jagdamba Banu has come to the Village" and "Hyena" focus on the continuing world of patriarchy and gender class discrimination which forces itself into the domain of personal relationships with unambiguous vehemence and brutal force. The 'modern' social and political relations have not wholly bypassed the physical and mental realm of this rural configuration. Elements of the pre-modern structure that ensure continuity of the old system of oppression remain virtually as dominant as they were.

No wonder, violence in its various shades is the recurring motif in the stories. Besides its direct manifestation like unnatural deaths, communal pressures, rape, poverty, starvation deaths, simmering, subterranean violence exists even in situations of suspicions that exist between parents and children, husbands and wives, master and servant.

In "Pret Yoni", Neetu the young graduate student undergoes the trauma of a train accident and an attempted rape but she is still treated as a culprit by her family members. The underlying assumption and acceptance of the premodern role of the woman as a chaste wife and daughter dogs even the economically independent modern career woman. Stories like "Promotion" and "Stepney" deal with the pressures of a middle class, urban working woman. In "Promotion" Lalita realizes that the male dominated ethos is still reluctant to give the woman the due that is hers and believes that "if a woman gets ahead ... it's not her talent but a special favour granted (maybe for) using her body?" "Promotion" makes another career woman Abha painfully aware of the fact that her maid Batasha has successfully taken her place in running the household—perhaps has even become a substitute for a wife. Even after this realization, Abha can ill afford to let Batasha go. Her search for a career, childcare and economic independence makes her dependence on Batasha inevitable.

Emotional deception and exploitation of a trusting adolescent servant boy Motya becomes the focus of "The Matter Won't End Here". "Hunger" takes us directly into the world of the impoverished. Widowed and starving Laxma is forced to hire out her infant Chotu to a beggar woman who eventually starves him to death. "The Tiger" focuses on a unique kind of economics which only communalism can sustain.

The wide variety of themes and situations come to be unified by the inherently strong ground for an emotional empathy with the loser, not the winner. Such writing often faces the risk of being propogandist. Chitra Mudgal, however, has the artist's capability of constructing nuances and complexities that redeem her stories by defying an easy solution or over-simplified assumptions, which is what propoganda usually relies on.

The ambiguous endings of several of her stories shifts the focus from the immediate problem to a universalization of the issue at hand. It is not really important to be certain about all things. What is significant is not what finally happened, but the situation that leads on to it. The open endings thus have the ambiguity that enriches them, that invite the participation of the reader who comes to these stories with his own experience of society. Yet with the element of uncertainty of event, there co-exists a duality that conveys a crystal clear message of humanity.

Stories like "Jagdamba Banu has come to the Village" and "Hyena" focus on the continuing world of patriarchy and gender class discrimination which forces itself into the domain of personal relationships with unambiguous vehemence and brutal force.

None of this of course would have been possible in the present book but for Deepa Aggarwal's success in translation. What makes a good translation cannot be adequately discussed here. More so because translation as a concept has lately become a subject of a well established debate. In case of the book under review, however, there is at least one inescapable task that the translator has to perform. She has to communicate to a readership at least a part of which may not be conversant with the human world in the north Indian countryside. She must build a bridge between the writer who wrote in Hindi and the reader who reads in English.

Deepa Aggarwal has done that quite faithfully. She attempts to create a language which is neither jarring like the cockeyed English, nor brutal in its attempt to be literal. She combines simple English with some fairly well known idioms both in English and Hindi to communicate the essence of the original, without in any way injuring its authenticity. Some words like *Jija, Bappa, Lota, Behini* remain unchanged.

Hyena and Other Short Stories also has a glossary at the end. One may argue at length about the merits and demerits of a glossary. It is however, certainly useful to have it in a book like the present one for even the Hindi speaking readers may be unaware of some of the local expressions used in the stories.

The book poses several problems about the contemporary rural as well as urban life. It involves the reader by raising questions and at times by even indicating the preferred solutions. It is fortunate that now the English readers too, will constitute a part of the readership of the book. A joyful journey in reading is assured.

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Genesis, Ethos, Growth

G. P. Deshpande

THE FIERY QUILL: NATIONALISM AND LITERATURE IN MAHARASHTRA

By B.G. Gokhale

Popular Prakashan, Mumbai, 1998, pp. xii & 190, Rs. 275.00

Professor Ghokhale who is Professor Emeritus of History and Asian Studies at Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem, North Carolina, USA, has written extensively on Ancient India, Buddhism, British and American view of India and so on. He has a book on Samudra Gupta the forth century Emperor. The only book of his that the present reviewer has seen is his study of Poona of the eighteenth century. There are very few histories of cities in India. As such his study seemed to break new ground.

In the volume under review Professor Gokhale turns to the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Marathi literature. In the first three chapters he gives us a genesis of nationalism in Maharashtra, its ethos and structure, and its growth from Chiplunkar (1850–1882) to Paranjape (1864–1929). In the last three chapters Professor Gokhale studies the historical novel, dramatic writing and poetry in the context of that nationalism. The accounts are based on the work of three novelists, seven playwrights and a few chosen early modern poets. He relates this writing to the emergence of modern nationalistic ideas in Maharashtra. He has also discussed essayists and historians like Chiplunkar, Paranjape and Rajwade. It is a useful, introductory volume.

The nationalism and nationalist inspiration that Professor Gokhale has in mind may be described as a traditional or restorative nationalism. The element of national glory has dominated these writers. Our subaltern historians would no doubt find fault with Professor Gokhale's view of nationalism although he does bring in ideas of Hobsbawm and others. He does not make the "congruence of the political and national unity and the role of ethnicity, religion, language, literature and history in the making of nationalism" sufficiently clear. Maharashtra's literary history is dominated by strong differences on all these aspects. Modern historians would question the emergence of nationalgeist (a term he borrows from Sir Isiah Berlin) which he perceives as rising in this period. A part of the difficulty would lie in the very nature of this nationalgeist which today's Dalit or a Grameen would see as upper-caste or Brahmanical geist.

It is perhaps Professor Gokhale's view of this nationalgeist that has resulted in his not taking notice of Phule as a poet and essayist. Obviously a title like Gulamgiri (Slavery) does not attract his attention in a book on nationalism and literature. He is content to note that the non-Brahamanical revolt "began in Pune through the ideas and activities of a great social reformer..... Jyotirao Govindrao Phule, by all accounts an extraordinary personality". Consequently one typical and representative attitude to imperialism and its contradiction with mainstream nationalism does not figure in his discussion.

Having said that I must reiterate that this is a good introductory volume. It would have been ideal if the book would have been available at a more affordable price than it actually is.

G.P. Deshpande is a Marathi playwright and teaches in the Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

A Votary of Life

Rabindra K. Swain

VERTICALS OF LIFE: SELECTED POEMS OF SACHI RAUT-RAY

Edited by Jayanta Mahapatra

Sahitya Akademi, 1996, pp. 166. Rs. 85.00

Reading the poems of Sachi Raut-Ray in English translation is going back into personal memory, racial past and Oriya literary history. It is to be reminded of a twelve-year boatman boy, a poem on whose martyrdom made Raut-Ray no less immortal than independence struggle, the blood and sweat of which one can feel in his poems. To think of Sachi Raut-Ray is naturally to think of the host of senior Oriya poets like Ramakanta Rath and Sitakanta Mahapatra who can never disown their lineage as poets to Sachi Raut-Ray.

It is befitting that a poet of stature like Jayanta Mahapatra should pay tribute to Sachi Raut-Ray by editing an anthology of his poems in English translation, *Verticals of Life: Selected Poems of Sachi Raut-Ray*. Even though Jayanta Mahapatra writes in English (of course, of late, in Oriya) Raut-Ray's poetry must have had its impact on his psyche as they belong to the same place, Cuttack, which was then the hub of political, cultural and literary activities of Orissa. Jayanta Mahapatra gives a nineteen-page introduction to this volume, in which he traces the early period of Sachi Raut-Ray, the making of him as a poet, evaluates his multi-faceted poetry and tries to find out the factors that determined his poetry. For this work of love, Mahapatra met the aged poet time and again and what lifts the introduction from a dry critical piece to a testament of reverence and documentation of rich literary heritage is Mahapatra's admiration of a father-figure of modern Oriya poetry. Take, for example, one such impression:

> I look at his eyes again, as I sit in front of him, and observe a tiredness that has overcome his frail limbs. But perhaps this is not the result of the natural course of ageing. Perhaps the changing world around him has contributed to it. Perhaps not, I do not know. His entire life has been one long struggle against the inhumanity he has encountered at different times and about which he could not do anything concrete (p. 18).

Out of the 73 poems in this volume, 23 are translated by Jayanta Mahaptra and the rest are by such able translators as Bibhu Padhi, Lakshmi Iyer Jayashree Mohanraj and also translations by two well known Oriya poets, J.P. Das and Rajendra Kishore Panda. Above all, like a jewel in the crown, this volume includes the forceful translation of Harindranath Chattopadhyay who did it as early as 1942 and made Raut-Ray accessible to a wider audience.

Sachi Raut-Ray is the harbinger of modern Oriya poetry, the greatness of whose work has been recognized by the Bharatiya Janpith in 1986. Setting him apart from his predecessors and showing how he broke away from the traditional way of Oriya poetry, Jayanta Mahapatra says,

> Surreal overtones and his exploration into the dreamscape of the unconscious gave his poetry a distinct newness, something unheard of in Oriya poets of the day. And inside all these shone his intense concerns for the people among whom he lived especially for the downtrodden and the oppressed. Nevertheless, his work was never done in any doctrainaire sense.

A poem like "Raja Jema" (The Princess) should introduce him more than any critique would:

> I am Sachi Raut-Ray
> (Not Tagore or Shelley)
> I am a poet of this earth and sky.
> I am not a professional singer.
> It is not my business
> To paint pictures on paper.

... what lifts the introduction from a dry critical piece to a testament of reverence and documentation of rich literary heritage is Mahapatra's admiration of a father-figure of modern Oriya poetry.

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When you open a book of mine
You'll feel the heart of a new man.
(Translated by Jayanta Mahapatra)

Raut-Ray's first collection of poems Patheya (Provisions for A Journey) was published when he was nineteen. But breaking new ground was yet to come. His awareness of the staple themes that were going to dominate his poetry later came to him with his gradual involvement with the events of his time. In 1930 he was almost expelled from school for joining the strike in the Satyagraha Movement. While studying in City College in Calcutta he worked for the Communist Party for which he was detained at Elysium Row and later in the Calcutta jail only to be released the morning the University examination was to begin. Returning to Orissa, his thoughts were immediately occupied with such forces as the Students' Movement, the Kissan Movement and the State People's Movement.

While he was active in such movements it was natural that the poems he wrote at that time should reflect his anger at the plight of the downtrodden. Even when he was fined Rs. 250 he did not stop. His inflammatory writings stirred the people of the remote hinterland of Orissa against feudal tyranny; his verse was on the lips of the people which emboldened them to even sacrifice their lives to police bullets. His poem "Mar Tu Jete Goli" (Shoot As Many Bullets As You Like) gave new impetus to the people of the Dhenkanal Praja Movement (1938–39). He sang, and with him the people:

Shoot as steadily as you can
Our breasts are bare and ready
for your bullets

It was at this time that a tragic incident took place which shook the entire state of Orissa. A twelve-year boy, Baji Raut used to support his mother by ferrying his little boat across the river Brahmani. One the night of October 13, 1938 he was posted by the the Praja Mandal, his people, to prevent the boat from being used by the police. The police retaliated by gunning the boy down for refusing to ferry them across. While the whole state burst into flames Sachi Raut-Ray gave expression, to the people's fury in his classic poem "Baji Raut". The translation of this poem carries well the original spirit:

(He) comes forever
In the world's yet unborn newcomers.
Mother each future babe
Returns your own to you.
In every triumph and defeat
His climbing footfalls beat
Making us dauntless in defeat
and wise in victory.
(Translated by Harindranath Chattopadhyaya)

Although the woes of the common people continued to be his principal concern gradually his poetry made shifts into different domains which include poems on light to contemplative moods, on love and death and on things commonplace or prophetic. In the changing times with shifting values the poet began to feel unsure of his identity:

How can I tell about myself
How can someone else either
When I do not myself know
Where I came from
Or where I am bound.
(Translated by J.P. Das)

But moments like this are fleeting. His poetry demonstrates that poetry is inseparable from the cultural and socio-political forces of the time in which it is written. He brought about a sort of "democratisation" of poetry, as Mahapatra says, by speaking of oppression and at the same time of emptiness and isolation of the world around him.

Above all, the exquisite lyricism in free verse which he brought into Oriya poetry has helped him occupy centre stage in the Oriya literary scene during the last five decades. From 1962 onwards, he has titled his collections of poetry merely as *Kavita 1962*, *1963* and so on. In one such collection *Kavita-1965* there is a poem "Ja Debi" in which speaking of the eternal theme of love and death, now in a Tantric mode, Raut-Ray emerges as one of the significant poets of the century:

And I live again, falling in love with her
My Sumbha-Nishumbha Existence only lives for her.
So she is a goddess, for how else,
Can she secure the slayed,
Death and Love, with strings of slaughter;
Because love is death, her order ultimate.
And receiving and giving seems complete
when each other we annihilate.
("Goddess Durga" translated by Jayanta Mahapatra)

Commenting on this poem, Jayanta Mahapatra says (with poems like this) "he could create an atmosphere of tone and voice that was rarely in evidence in Orissa, perhaps in the rest of the country as well" (p. 17).

Rabindra K Swain works for the Orissa Gazetteers in Bhubaneshwar.

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Gerards Print Shop, Wattala, 1998, pp. 62, price not mentioned

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Sahitya Akademi, 1997, pp. 874, Rs. 450.00

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Oxford University Press, 1998, pp. 152, Rs. 325.00

Nine Indian Women Poets: An Anthology
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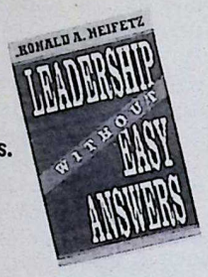

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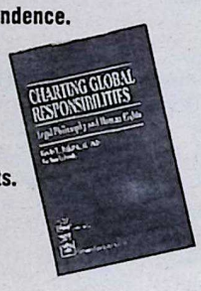

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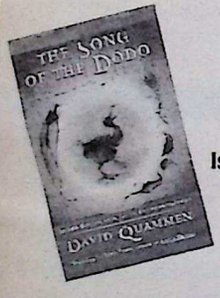

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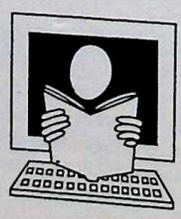

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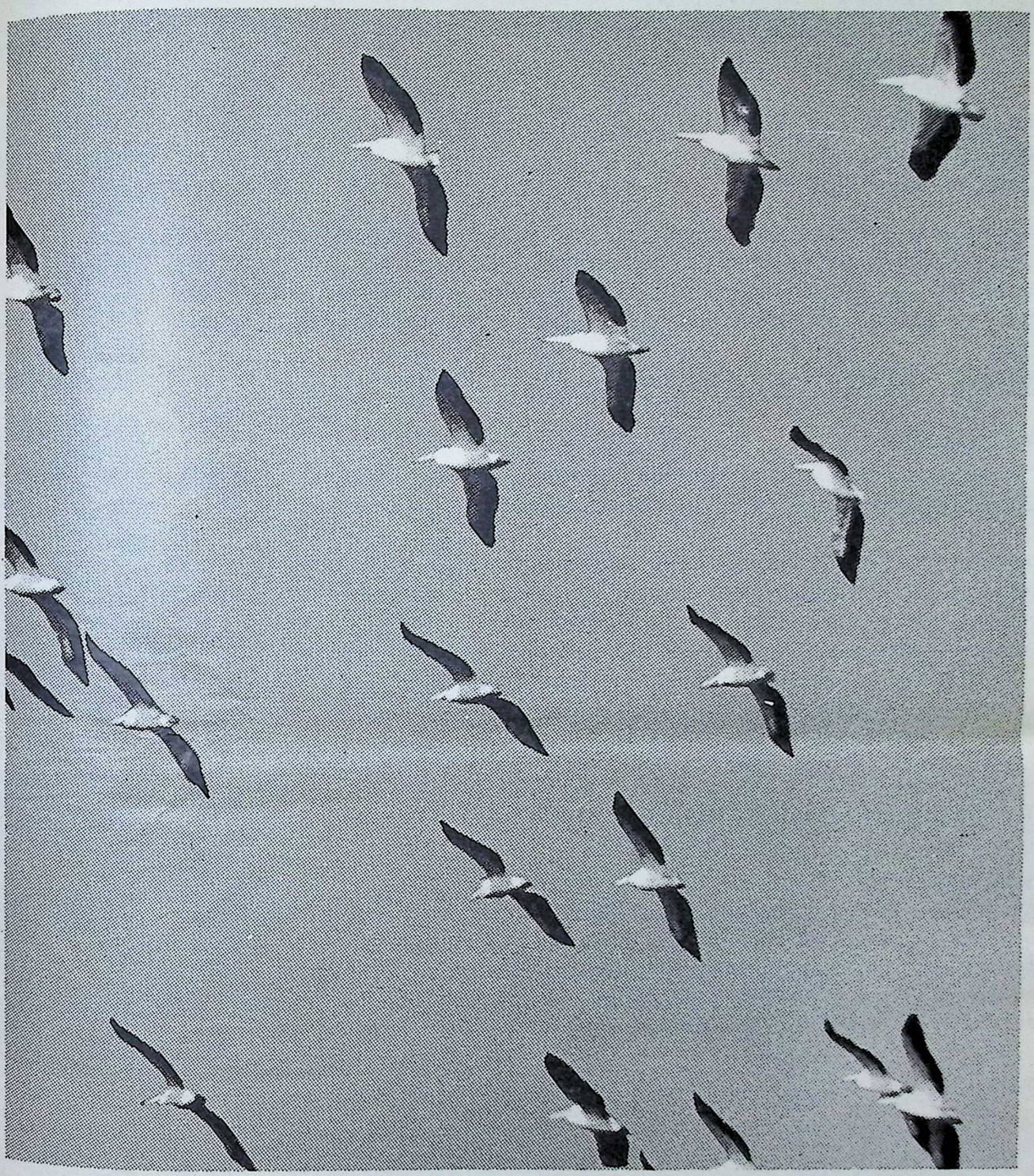

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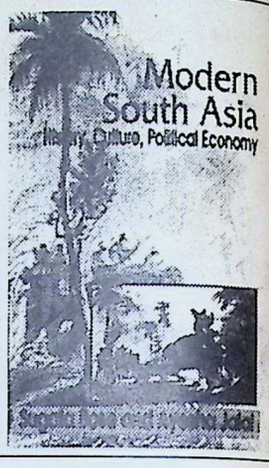

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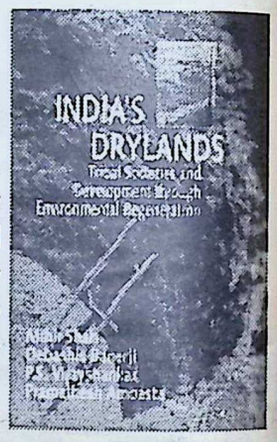

India's Drylands
Tribal Societies and Development through Environmental Regeneration
Mihir Shah / Debashis Banerji / P.S. Vijayshankar & Pramathesh Ambasta

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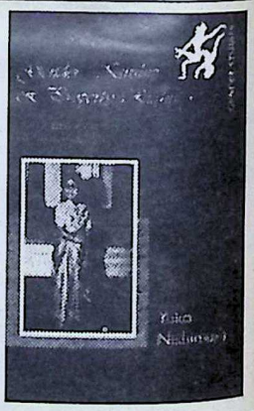

Gender, Kinship and Property Rights
Nagarattar Womanhood in South India
Yuko Nishimura

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